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CHAPTER XXII.

A HANDSOME OFFER.

WHEN people have nothing serious to do love-making goes on apace, which is one of the reasons why idle folks are always getting into mischief. Lord Cheribert, as it will have been concluded, was already deeply smitten by Grace, and though Walter Sinclair had started so long behind him he had made up for lost time, and was soon as much in love as he. The difference of social position, which, though he did not acknowledge it to himself, made the young lord so easy in his mind as regarded his possible rival, did not afflict Walter one whit. In this respect his very deficiencies were to his advantage; he was naturally far from conceited, but the manner of his bringing up, and the unconventional life he had led, prevented his recognising his inferiority.

In his view one man was as good as another until the other had shown himself the better man. In the part of the world where he had been living rank had not been much thought of, for the simple reason that it did not exist; and wealth, though more highly considered (for what it procured, not for itself), was transitory. A man made his pile in a few months, and often lost it again in the same number of hours. Lord Cheriberts, without the Lord, he had often met with, who were ready to lay their

bottom dollar, or their top one, upon any event, so that *that* side of the young nobleman's character was quite intelligible to him. He looked upon it with great charity, but also some contempt, and thought it a pity so good a fellow should have made such a fool of himself. For as to other matters he admired him, though he could scarcely say for what. It was the first time he had experienced, in a man, the charm of manner, and he was attracted by it none the less because it showed itself in a rival. In that respect he at once admitted the other's superiority, but in that alone.

In his relations with Grace, though he did not conceal from himself that he loved her, his position was entirely different; he was humility itself; and this also was more owing to his upbringing than to his nature, which was one of practical common-sense. In the wild West, and even in the West where it is not so wild, there is an admiration for the female more in proportion to her rarity than her deserts; the most commonplace girl is a heroine, and women of the earth, earthy, are reckoned goddesses. The mistake is highly creditable to a community in which tenderness and refinement are not the leading features, and, though in individual cases it is sometimes disastrous, has on the whole a civilising effect. Moreover, what is very curious, though it makes rough men gentle in their relations with the other sex, it does not make them shy. The knowledge, perhaps, that they may be called upon at any moment to act as her protector—a term in the Old World which has, alas! changed its meaning—induces a certain familiarity, which has at the same time no tinge of disrespect. No one could accuse Walter Sinclair of shyness; he had a perfect self-possession that Mr. Roscoe mistook for 'cheek,' but, the ladies well understood, was nothing of the kind; he showed it when conversing with Grace, as with everybody else, but his respect for her was reverential. There was nothing to be found fault with in Lord Cheribert as to that (and considering what *his* upbringing had been, it was proof indeed of his honest nature), but the difference between them in this matter was very great. Where the young nobleman felt his unworthiness was in his fallen fortunes, or at deepest in the folly that had destroyed them; whereas Sinclair bowed before her as to a shrine of Purity which he trembled to approach even with his shoes off. Women in England are slow to understand this position of affairs, nor is it of much consequence, since it so

seldom takes place. The two young fellows became great friends, but we may be sure they never talked of these matters.

The Miss Tremenheres had almost come to an end of their tenantry at Elm Place when Mr. Allerton paid them a visit; it was natural enough that he should do so, since he would have no other opportunity, as they were not to return to town before going to Cumberland; but, as a matter of fact, this was only the secondary object of his coming. He wanted to see Lord Cheribert on business matters, and he was much pleased, and not at all surprised, to find him where he was. The gentlemen of course all lodged at Milton, but they boarded over the way. The lawyer smiled when he discovered how very much at home the young nobleman made himself there, and was not at all alarmed at finding Sinclair doing the like. He took his lordship's view as regarded any danger to be apprehended from him as a possible rival in Grace's affections, only more so.

To a family solicitor, above all other people in the world, the claims of birth and wealth (for the two must be combined; it is no use your being descended from Hengist if you have but 300*l.* a year) seem overwhelming, even in courtship. The ladies who are his clients, however young and innocent they may be of the world's ways, have generally an instinct for eligibility. They may fall in love, and even at first sight, like Mary Jane and Jemima Anne, but not without having some previous knowledge of the position and property of their enslaver. The majority of these possible heroes are out of the question before they can make their first observation about Ascot or Mr. Irving.

A certain atmosphere, not necessarily of property but of appropriateness, surrounds the person of such heiresses as divinity is said to hedge a king. Cases have been known, of course, where the merest adventurers have broken through it and carried off their prize, but the incident is rare; moreover, though the character of Walter Sinclair was by no means easy for a man like Mr. Allerton to read, it was clear to him that he was no adventurer, at all events in the ordinary sense. He had no swagger, no pretence of any kind; he was not particularly polite; he looked you straight in the face when he spoke to you, and when he spoke of his belongings he was anything but boastful. His father, to judge by his own account of him, had been far from prosperous; beyond that point in his genealogy, either from charity or want of knowledge, he forbore to speak; and it was the

lawyer's experience that your adventurer can never avoid references to his grandfather. Moreover, Sinclair referred to his own past as having been neither successful nor satisfactory, which in a young gentleman who had at five-and-twenty years of age apparently made enough money to live upon for the rest of his days, was certainly a proof of modesty.

Still Mr. Allerton gave more attention to the young fellow than he would have done had he met him only in male society, and what he saw of him he liked, with one exception. He did not like the respect he showed to Mr. Edward Roscoe. The lawyer, of course, was prejudiced against that gentleman; but even allowing for that, it was certainly strange that an honest young fellow such as Sinclair appeared to be, and also of great independence of character, should take to him at all. At first, indeed, this circumstance awoke grave suspicions in Mr. Allerton. He knew that Roscoe wanted Grace to marry; and if she could be married to some creature of his own instead of Lord Cheribert, who was now altogether removed from his influence, it would obviously be to his advantage; moreover, he thought he detected a willingness on the part of Roscoe to play into Sinclair's hands. If there was really any agreement, tacit or otherwise, between the two men, it would be a very serious matter. This unworthy suspicion, it is only due to the lawyer's honest heart, as well as to his sagacity, to say, did not last long; and though the problem why Sinclair was so civil to Roscoe still puzzled him, it ceased to have much importance.

Lord Cheribert's affairs were at all events much more pressing. It is a drawback to a man of financial genius like the late Mr. Joseph Tremehere, or at all events a drawback to his clients, that his excessive skill in the management of affairs, and the self-confidence born of it, causes him to take every thread in his own hands, and trust little or nothing to others; this works well enough while he is alive, to hold the threads—and therefore answers his purpose with sufficient completeness—but when he dies his multifarious operations often present a tangled web to those who come after him.

The knots by which Josh had secured his own interests were neat enough, but the ramifications of his clients' affairs were numerous and intricate. In Lord Cheribert's case they were particularly so, because of his own recklessness and contempt for business transactions. It is distressing to a lawyer when he

asks a client in whom he feels a personal interest, 'Is this your signature, my lord?' to be answered, 'It looks like it, but I have not the faintest remembrance of ever having put it there.'

Lord Cheribert had no recollection of any debt that wasn't a bet, which greatly impeded the settlement of his affairs. Sundry creditors were pressing him with their little accounts, and showing a strong disinclination to 'let them run,' even to the date when, as all the world now knew, Lord Morella was to come forward and show that a father had his duties as well as his privileges. In the aggregate these debts came to a large sum, though they sank into almost insignificance compared with the obligations due to the Tremenhere estate; those, however, we may be sure, were well secured, and the family could afford to wait; the family, indeed, knew nothing about them; it was not thought necessary by Mr. Allerton to go into such details with the ladies, and Mr. Roscoe, though of course he knew all about them, had likewise abstained from communicating them. It was quite sufficient for the purposes of both those gentlemen that Lord Cheribert should know the facts.

It would no doubt have distressed the ladies to feel that their guest was their debtor, and would have made their relations with him not a little embarrassing; whereas it was the lawyer's secret hope that his client would see for himself how extremely convenient it would be to pay off $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. of his obligations by a matrimonial union with one of the fair creditors; if he had thought of it the probability is, the effect would have been exactly the reverse of what was intended; but, as a matter of fact, the circumstance never occurred to him; Lord Cheribert never thought of his creditors.

Some of them, however, as has been said, thought a good deal of him (though not in an appreciatory sense), and were making themselves very unpleasant. Lord Morella could have stopped them with a word, but that word he would not speak till his son had given up his evil ways for good and all. He had promised to do so, as we know, at a certain date; but until that day arrived his father declined to have anything to do with him. His paternal affection was ready laid, like a housemaid's fire, but he positively declined to apply the match to it till after the 14th proximo, when his son's last steeplechase was to come off. The Earl had an immense reputation for 'determination of character,' and it was inherited

by his son and heir, though in him he described it as the obstinacy of a pig. He would not advance a shilling to help him, nor permit his lawyer to advance one; and, on the other hand, the young man would not pay forfeit for the race in question, though the old lord would have gladly laid down the money twenty times over. Matters had come, in short, to a deadlock, and the worst of it was that the circumstances greatly militated against the genuineness of the promised reconciliation between father and son: you can't hold over affection like an accommodation bill, nor postpone filial love to a particular date in the calendar; they are apt to grow cool in the meantime.

The lawyer had at least as much tact as members of his profession usually possess, and had endeavoured to conciliate both sides—though he would have much preferred to knock their heads together—but his efforts were in vain; he began to fear that a public scandal could hardly be averted, and if that took place Lord Cheribert's chance with Grace would be seriously endangered; it was difficult to hint to him of this peril, and if it had been done he would probably have thought little of it, he was himself so used to public scandals.

On the matter of his debts, indeed, he was—with men—entirely without reticence, and he not a little disconcerted the good lawyer by speaking of them in the smoking-room at Elm Place with his usual frankness.

'What *does* it matter?' he said, when reproached by Mr. Allerton for his imprudence. '*You* know all about them, Roscoe knows all about them; and to Sinclair, who, though an excellent fellow himself, has probably been witness to half the crimes in the calendar and some outside it, the fact of a man's being in a hole as regards money matters can appear nothing very serious. Any talk of that kind must be to him like a description of a day with the rabbits on the hill, after a tiger-hunt; there is not enough sport in it to attract his attention.'

The lawyer smiled; he was much too wise to press the point, or any point that was not absolutely essential, on 'such a cat-a-mountain of a client'; but he thought it possible that the financial embarrassments of Lord Cheribert might have some attraction for Mr. Sinclair notwithstanding their want of dramatic interest. Nor, as it turned out, was he mistaken.

On the morning after the conversation in the smoking-room, Mr. Allerton, who was an early riser, found Sinclair on the lawn

at Milton before breakfast, with a short black pipe in his mouth of the most reprehensible appearance.

'It's a bad habit, I know,' said that young gentleman, noting the look which the lawyer bestowed upon his clay idol, 'but our fellows breakfast late here, and there's nothing like tobacco for staying the appetite.'

'So I should think,' returned the lawyer drily; 'if I was to smoke a pipe before breakfast, I should never eat anything all day.'

'It does not interfere in that way with me at all, as you will see at breakfast-time,' answered the young fellow, laughing, 'and there have been days when want of appetite was not so much my difficulty as the want of anything to eat; then a pipe is a boon indeed.'

'Things have been as bad as that with you, have they?' replied the lawyer; he rather liked his new acquaintance (save for that inexplicable civility of his to Roscoe), and was not unwilling to hear something of his past; it might come under the head of useful knowledge.

'Yes; one does not always get fresh eggs in the morning out West, and claret-cup'—he pointed to the place across the river where that compound was exceedingly well made, as they both knew—'is unknown at the diggings.'

'At the diggings? You were there, were you? I hope you made your pile.'

'I don't look like that, do I? I hope not.'

The other did not understand what he meant, but saw no necessity to inquire; he was not in search of sentiments but facts. Experience had taught him not to interrupt when his object was to obtain information. You may generally trust a man who is talking about himself to proceed with that interesting subject.

'Yes, I was the man who first found gold at One Tree Hill.'

The lawyer nodded, as if he was as conversant with that locality as with Shooter's Hill or Primrose Hill.

'There were three of us,' continued the young fellow, in a tone of a reminiscence, and with that far-off look in his eyes which the ladies had noticed; 'we had but ten dollars amongst us, but it was not a place to spend much money in; not a hut within ten miles, and the nearest drinking-bar a long day's journey from us. I wish to heaven,' he added with vehemence, 'it had been further still.'

He paused ; an observation seemed to be expected.

‘Drink must be a great temptation in those out-of-the-way places,’ hazarded the lawyer.

‘Not to *me*, sir,’ was the haughty rejoinder. ‘There is no man living who has ever seen Walter Sinclair drunk.’ Had Lord Cheribert been present it is possible he would have suggested that there might be more reasons than one for that ; there was a certain solemnity in the young man’s assertion that might well have provoked raillery ; but it did not do so with Mr. Allerton. He understood that the conditions of existence of which the other was speaking were very different from his present ones, and that his boast was not only genuine but had a justification. ‘However, better men than I have given way to liquor,’ continued Sinclair modestly, ‘and it is easy to resist what has no attractions for one.’

‘It must be a great experience, that first finding of gold,’ remarked the lawyer tentatively, like a huntsman casting for the scent.

The young man nodded assentingly. ‘Yes. For the moment it appears as if one had found everything. To penniless men like us it seemed like heaven itself. The first nugget might be the last, of course, but it might also be wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. Some men think of the gold itself ; others, of what they will do with it. I had at that time a use for wealth, and my discovery filled me with delirious joy. Our first act was to solemnly swear that we would keep the matter secret from our fellow-creatures. We worked like galley-slaves, but for a rate of pay that would have satisfied a prime minister. We had hit on a very rich lode. On the fourth day one of the two men who were prospecting with me disappeared. The other when he missed him uttered the most frantic execrations. “What is the matter ?” I said. “Why should Dick have come to harm ?” “Harm !” he answered, “I wish he had a bullet through his brain ! He will bring harm to *us*. The mad fool is off to the drinking-bar.” “But he will come back again, I suppose ?” “Yes, but with five thousand men to rob us of our rights.” He judged only too well. The doting wretch, having money in his pocket, or the equivalent of it, could not resist the demon for a dram ; once in liquor, he began of course to boast of the new gold-diggings, and the morning of the third day saw a cloud of miners coming like locusts over the hill. They behaved fairly enough, and gave us the first choice of claim as discoverers. We elected to stay on our patch,

and in a fortnight there was not another ounce of gold to be got in it, though we worked as hard as ever. Other men were more lucky, and made great fortunes; nor, indeed, had I any right to complain, since in that one month I made enough to keep me, I hope, and something over, for the remainder of my days.'

'A golden month, indeed,' observed the lawyer.

'Yet the vilest one man ever passed,' answered the other vehemently. 'Greed is unpleasant enough to look upon in any shape, but as you see it naked and unashamed in a goldfield it is loathsome indeed. I should not have troubled you with such a story at all, Mr. Allerton, but for a reason: if it had not been told, you might have said to yourself, "This rolling-stone has probably gathered no moss," and you would have been disinclined to believe in my solvency.'

'Why should you say that?' said the lawyer, smiling. He meant of course to be complimentary; to imply that no suspicion of his companion's want of means had ever entered his mind; but the other took him *au pied de la lettre*.

'Well, for this reason. I was obliged to overhear Lord Cheribert's talk last night about his private affairs. It seems there is some hitch about the immediate settlement of certain debts, which may cause him some embarrassment: I don't understand the matter, but I wish to say that 5,000*l.* or so of what I possess is ready to my hand, and very much at his service.'

'Do I understand that you offer to lend Lord Cheribert 5,000*l.* on his note of hand?'

'Certainly; or without it.'

It was a matter of professional principle with Mr. Allerton never to be surprised at anything, but this proposition fairly staggered him. It was evident that the man who made it was no fool, and must therefore very well comprehend that his proposition if carried into effect would do away with the one advantage he possessed over his rival (if such, as the lawyer suspected, Lord Cheribert was) in being free from financial embarrassment; nay, he must be aware, from what had passed in the smoking-room, that the existence of these debts of his lordship's threatened him with public exposure, which must be prejudicial indeed to any matrimonial project. Yet here was this young fellow actually offering to supply his rival with the sinews of war—and love. As a matter of fact, the offer could not be accepted, and would be utterly insufficient if it was. Mr. Allerton, of course, could have raised any

amount of money to supply the young lord's temporary needs; but this Lord Morella had positively forbidden him to do.

The young lord could not raise the sum required on his own security, and his father hoped to use his helplessness as a lever to effect his own object, namely, Lord Cheribert's immediate retirement from the turf. To have taken Sinclair's money (even had it been sufficient) would have been to break his word to the old lord, which Mr. Allerton was incapable of doing; but nothing of this was, of course, known to Sinclair, and the thought of the young man's unselfish generosity moved the old lawyer very much.

'You are a capital fellow, Sinclair,' he exclaimed, 'and I thank you five thousand times on behalf of my young friend and client; but your offer, liberal as it is, is useless to him; I am sorry and ashamed to say it would be a mere drop in the ocean.'

'I am sorry,' observed the other gravely. 'Perhaps I ought to have known as much. I hope,' he added, with a quick flush, 'that you do not think I did know it, Mr. Allerton?'

'I am quite sure you did not. Your offer, I am convinced, was as genuine as it was generous. Will you gratify a curiosity that is not mere inquisitiveness and tell me why you made it?'

'Well, it is hardly worth talking about, and especially since it has come to nothing; but the fact is, even if I had been so fortunate as to help Lord Cheribert out of a tight place, the obligation would still have been on my side. When I was in a tight place in trouble with the weeds down yonder'—and he pointed over his shoulder in the direction of Milton lasher—'it was all they could do, I have been told, to prevent Lord Cheribert coming to drown with me. He did kick off his shoes to do it. One doesn't forget a thing like that, you know.'

'But you had done the same, it seems, for a dog?'

'I? That was very different. I was used to taking my life in my hand, as a thing not especially valuable. Don't mistake me for one of the mock-modest ones; I think myself every bit as good as his lordship, or any other lord in the land. But that is not *his* view, I reckon. Here was a young fellow who thought a huge lot of himself, and of whom other people thought more, ready to fling his all away on the off-chance of saving a mere loafer, a nobody—of course you will not tell him one word of this.'

'Of course not: here's my hand upon it. And now, Mr. Sinclair, if I have not exhausted your patience, just one question

more. What is the obligation that binds you to Mr. Roscoe? He didn't kick off *his* shoes, I'll be sworn.'

'I am under no obligation to Mr. Roscoe.'

'No, but you think you are; at all events you behave as if you were. Come: you must not be angry with an old fellow who has nothing but your good at heart, or, what will weigh with you more, the good of another whom you esteem, I think. I say again it is not mere inquisitiveness that makes me put the question. Why do you pay such deference to Mr. Roscoe?'

'He not being one of my own sort at all, as you would seem to say,' returned the young man, smiling. 'Well, I don't know that he is. But he has a brother—Dick—who was one of the firmest friends (though not a very lucky one) that my poor father ever had; and for his sake I can't help leaning toward Mr. Edward perhaps a trifle more than he deserves—Dick is coming home this autumn, I am glad to hear.'

'Indeed?' was the dry rejoinder. 'Well, in the meantime, my dear Mr. Sinclair, take my advice, and when leaning towards Mr. Edward be very careful not to lean *on* him, for he's not the kind of prop that stands a strain. Come, let us go in to breakfast.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

GOOD ADVICE.

It was curious, since Walter Sinclair was but a chance visitor of the Tremenhères, with whom their acquaintance would probably not at most outlast their occupancy of Elm Place, that Mr. Allerton should have troubled himself to give that word of warning to the young fellow. His motives for so doing were mixed, and perhaps not recognised even by himself. He had not only a well-grounded distrust but a very cordial dislike of Mr. Roscoe, which would have prompted him to set anyone on his guard whom he perceived to be subject to that gentleman's influence. But he had also begun to entertain a liking for Sinclair, almost in despite of himself. Home-trained young gentlemen who, instead of becoming clerks to respectable solicitors, or embracing other decent professions in their own country, emigrated to uncivilised climes and tried their luck in goldfields, were not, as a rule, at all to his taste. He had, as we know, even entertained the suspicion that this young man had been a creature of Roscoe himself, and at all events felt it to be a

mistake that a person of his condition had been allowed to attain a familiar footing with such a family as the Tremenhers. Now he certainly thought differently upon these points. There was a frankness about the young man that disarmed his doubts; and an independence of character that no longer seemed to him the impudence of the adventurer.

The generosity of his late offer was something altogether out of the lawyer's experience, and made a deep impression on him. For a moment it had struck him that though Sinclair had imposed silence about it to Lord Cheribert he might not have been as unwilling for Grace to hear of it; but that he dismissed from his mind as an unworthy suspicion. He felt that Sinclair was incapable of such a method of recommending himself; while at the same time the action convinced him that he had no serious intention of becoming her suitor: it would in that case have been putting weapons into the hand of an adversary which neither gratitude nor chivalry demanded—a mere Quixotic act. Assured, therefore, that there was no danger of that kind to be apprehended, Mr. Allerton allowed his liking for the young fellow to have free course. He praised him to Grace, and he praised him to Lord Cheribert, and was pleased to find that they both shared his good opinion of him.

With the elder Miss Tremenhers Sinclair also appeared to be a favourite; Mr. Roscoe—but this was not placed to the credit side of the young man's account—treated him with marked civility. To any outsider, indeed, like Sinclair himself, who knew nothing of Agnes and Philippa as volcanoes, whose eruption was suppressed with difficulty by a master hand, the company at Elm Place seemed a very pleasant one, who had little to think about beyond amusement, and making themselves agreeable.

At the best, however, it was evident it was but a holiday party.

'You will miss your guests when you leave Elm Place,' said Mr. Allerton to Miss Agnes; 'Cumberland will seem just a little *triste* at first, I fear.'

'Lord Cheribert has promised to look in upon us; he has taken rooms at the "Angler's Rest" for the fishing.'

'Indeed!' This was news to Mr. Allerton, and good news. 'That will be very pleasant both for him and for you.'

'And Mr. Sinclair talks of coming too, upon the same errand.'

'Indeed!' He used the same word, but with a very different intonation. Matters, then, were much more serious in that quarter

than he had anticipated. Sinclair had told him, when he had remonstrated with him in a paternal way on having no profession, that he rather thought of becoming a civil engineer. But the vicinity of Halswater Hall was hardly suitable for the prosecution of that design. He could not bring himself to believe that the young fellow could think of entering the lists against Lord Cheribert; but the circumstance determined him to speak a word or two with his client. The more he thought of the young lord's difficulties the more he felt convinced that a union with Grace was the best and quickest way out of them, supposing only that her father's will could be set aside—a matter which, though he could not well move in it himself, he felt could be accomplished by mutual agreement. It was curious, considering his own strong religious convictions, that Grace's faith did not present an insurmountable obstacle; but she was certainly not strongly attached to her creed; and it is observable that whereas religious persons exceedingly resent any apostasy from their own communion, they think it the most natural thing in the world that others should exchange theirs for it.

So, when he and his client were strolling in the woods one day, he suddenly observed to him—it must be confessed, rather *à propos des bottes*; but the other, as he justly guessed, by design never gave him the least chance of alluding to the subject—‘Well, I hope Miss Grace is as great a favourite of yours as she is of mine, Cheribert.’

‘How can you ask such a question?’ was the unexpected rejoinder, delivered in the driest of tones. ‘Miss Grace is a favourite with everybody.’

‘Well, that is one of the reasons why I did ask it,’ returned the lawyer. He was piqued by the young man's unwillingness to confide in him, and also irritated by the indifference he had all along exhibited to the dangerous condition of his affairs. ‘It is really time, Cheribert, that you took things more seriously. I had hoped from finding you here that you had some motive beyond merely enjoying yourself, which is, after all, not the end of life.’

‘I have come to that conclusion myself, Allerton, but, I am afraid, a little late.’

The unexpected mildness of the reply disarmed the lawyer; there was also a tone of penitence in it still more surprising, and which, he rightly judged, could be only attributable to some new and gentle influence.

‘With a man of your age, nothing in the way of amendment can be too late,’ he answered. ‘Notwithstanding all that has come and gone yet, there is nothing to despair of in your case. The race of life, to use a metaphor that is familiar to you, is in heats; we have most of us more than one run for our money; you have lost the first heat, that is all.’

‘For my part,’ returned the young lord grimly, ‘I am inclined to think life a toss-up—the best out of three to win—and that I have lost the first toss. In either case the chances against me are considerable. Five to two is the betting, but the real odds are three to one.’

‘As a very old friend, and one, I hope, incapable of an impertinence,’ observed the lawyer gently, ‘might I hazard a guess at the particular “event” you have on your mind, Cheribert?’

‘There is no need to guess; you may take it, if you please, for granted,’ replied the young man frankly.

‘Let me say at once, then, that I am glad to hear you tell me so,’ answered Mr. Allerton cordially. ‘For a man in your position there is always a fresh start in life—unless, indeed, he makes a false one—in marriage. His past is forgotten; his future is once more in his own hands.’

‘And the lady’s,’ suggested the young lord, smiling.

‘Just so; and in the case we are considering it could not be better placed. It would be idle, however, to conceal from you, Cheribert, that there will be great difficulties in what you are proposing to yourself—difficulties in gaining your father’s consent, difficulties as regards the law; though in both these matters you may rely on my doing my very best to help you.’

‘You have again forgotten the lady,’ observed the other drily.

‘No, I have not. There will also, as you say, be difficulties no doubt, in that quarter. It will be, of course, absolutely necessary that you should possess the same faith.’

‘All right. I am completely at her disposal so far: a very easy convert.’

‘Cheribert, I am astonished at you! On a subject of this kind I did hope you would forbear to jest.’

‘Still, one of us, as it seems, will have to do it.’

It is quite right to be simple and unsophisticated, but people ought to know where to stop, at all events to refrain from blurting out unpleasant truths. Mr. Allerton felt quite embarrassed.

'The case of Miss Grace,' he answered obliquely, 'is very peculiar. She is not devoted to the faith of her fathers.'

'As I am,' murmured the young lord, but the other ignored the sarcasm.

'In point of fact,' he continued with a forced smile, 'it is doubtful whether our old friend "Josh" was ever a Jew at all; it is my belief he only pretended to be so with the object of making himself unpleasant as a testator. His family were not brought up in that religion, or, if they were, only very loosely. I am pretty sure we shall not find that matter an insuperable obstacle.'

'I am quite sure of it,' observed Lord Cheribert drily.

The reply, and still more the tone of it, was far from satisfactory to his companion, but it was a relief to him to have done with the topic.

'Well, what I venture to advise, Cheribert, is that there should be as little delay as possible in proceeding with this very important matter. Something has come to my knowledge—which you must excuse my going into—that makes it highly desirable that you and the young lady should come to some mutual understanding. It has nothing to do with the other matters which are pressing upon your attention, though I need hardly say that they would cease to be so very urgent in case the affair in question could be brought to a successful issue.'

'It seems to be rather a matter of business, nevertheless,' observed the young man coldly.

'My dear Cheribert, your position does not admit of your settling your matrimonial affairs with the same ease as yonder ploughboy, nor even as a young gentleman such as Mr. Walter Sinclair, for example, with no impediments of birth and rank, not to mention other encumbrances of your own making.'

The lawyer waited a moment to see whether the mention of Sinclair's name awakened any sign of suspicion in his young friend, but it seemed to have made no impression upon him whatever. His face was graver far than he had ever seen it, but quite unruffled. 'Yes, Cheribert, he continued, 'for you—if you insist upon plainness of speech—marriage must be to some extent a bargain. There must be give and take on both sides; certain stipulations must be made; certain arrangements, tacit or expressed, agreed upon. It will not be necessary, of course, for you to go into them with the lady herself: her own good sense will point them out to her. She will understand that there are, and

must be, contingencies—but you are not, I perceive, favouring me with your attention.'

The lawyer spoke with severity, and like a man whose feelings were hurt; his tone, rather than what he said, roused the other from his abstraction.

If Mr. Allerton imagined that mere weariness of serious talk—as, indeed, had often been the case before—was affecting his companion he did him an injustice. Lord Cheribert was serious enough himself, though it was quite true that he had not heard one word of what the other had just addressed to him.

'Pardon me, Allerton,' he said in his gentlest manner and with his most winning smile, 'I am not unconscious, believe me, of the good service you were trying to do me; I was only wondering how it came about that it should be worth your while, or any man's while, to take so much trouble on my account, being, as I am, such a worthless vagabond.'

'I should not permit your enemies—if, indeed, you have any—to say that in my hearing, my lord,' said the lawyer gently. He was touched by the young man's self-abasement; if only his father could see him at this moment, was his inward thought, how smoothly things would be made for him!

'You would do all that is kind and friendly, I am quite sure,' continued Lord Cheribert gravely, 'but that would not alter the fact, you know, nor people's opinion of me.'

'Let us hope that *everybody* at all events will not be of that opinion,' said Mr. Allerton, smiling significantly. 'I would put that to the test at once if I were you.'

'But how should she *know*?' said the young man bitterly. 'It is a noble reflection, indeed, to feel that one's hope of happiness in the future lies in a woman's ignorance of one's past.'

'It is a position, nevertheless, in which a good many men who go a-wooing must needs find themselves,' returned the lawyer drily; '"faint heart never won fair lady," my lord, is a good motto. I am bound for town to-day, as you know; will it be too much to ask of you to drop me a line to say how you have prospered in this matter?'

Lord Cheribert nodded and held out his hand, which the other warmly grasped. Two men with less in common as to pursuits and opinions it would have been difficult to find; the difference in their ages, great as it was, was slight compared with the diversity of their minds; but they had a very genuine friendship

for one another ; the lawyer had never felt his regard for his young client so strongly, which afterwards, through certain circumstances, became a source of satisfaction to him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AU REVOIR.

As it is better, the doctors tell us, to leave off eating with an appetite than to stuff ourselves to repletion, so it is with respect to taking holiday. It is quite possible to have too much of even pleasure and leisure, as idle people find to their cost. To the toiler, bound to be back at his work by a certain date, it often seems the height of happiness if, like more fortunate men, he could remain *sine die* by the seaside, or at the lakes, where he has spent such happy days ; he thinks that he could never tire out the welcome that kindly nature for so brief a space has offered him. But in this he is mistaken. Amusement without work, too far prolonged, is like veal without bacon, or sturgeon, a fish that is thought very highly of by those who have not tasted it. To Walter Sinclair, when the time came for him to return to town, it seemed that in leaving Elm Place he was quitting Eden. There was no such compulsion on him as there was with our first parents ; but he had business in town in connection with that civil engineer affair about which he had unfortunately taken Mr. Allerton into his confidence ; the lawyer had aided him in the matter, and an appointment had been made with certain persons which he could hardly decline to keep. Moreover, Mr. Allerton was bound for town himself, and had offered to be his travelling companion. There was only a week or two more in which river life could have had its attractions for him, but still he was loth to leave it ; and much he envied Lord Cheribert, who, as he imagined (though on this particular occasion he was mistaken), was free to go or stay as he pleased, wherever he would. He had had no previous acquaintance of the pleasures of home, and far less of a home of pleasure, and he would have thoroughly enjoyed himself but for a vague longing for a certain something which he felt to be beyond his reach. His general views of life, which, if somewhat crude, were honest and wholesome enough, had in no way altered ; rank was to him still but the guinea-stamp, and personal merit the only test of superiority that he acknowledged ; but he had

become aware during the last few weeks that other people, for whom he had a respect, and who had treated him with hospitality, thought very differently about these things. The comforts and luxuries with which he had seen them surrounded, though he cared little or nothing for them himself, had made an impression on him; he felt that to those who were accustomed to them they might appear as necessary as his short black pipe and screw of tobacco were to him, and of course he had not the power to bestow them. He knew nothing of the provisions of Mr. Tremenhare's will, but believed all of the ladies to be heiresses, and though he had been a gold-digger Walter Sinclair was not a fortune-hunter.

There was nothing in Indian life that had so disgusted him—for he had not had the same cruel experience of it that his father had had—as their treatment of their women, who toiled and slaved for them while they took their pleasure. To him a woman was not only an object of reverence but something to be worked for, and he would have scorned to owe his wealth to the bounty of a wife. Nevertheless, Grace Tremenhare was as sweet and attractive to him as the flower to the bee, though he had no intention of making honey out of her; and he found it a much sadder business than he expected, when the time came, to say 'good-bye' to her. Considering that she was only one of his three hostesses, and not the chief one, it might have been thought that he might have been contented with a general farewell; but somehow, though he would have shaken hands, even had it been for the last time, with the two elder sisters in the presence of each other without the least embarrassment, he felt that his *au revoir* to Grace (for he had been encouraged, we know, to come to Cumberland) should be said to her alone.

He found his opportunity on the campshed, where from the other bank he had seen her walking alone before breakfast, and shot across in his skiff like an arrow from the bow, to join her.

'You are an earlier riser than your friends, Mr. Sinclair,' she observed with a welcoming smile.

'It has not been necessary for them as it has often been for me,' he said, 'to shoot or catch their breakfasts; and the habit lasts when the necessity no longer exists.'

'For my part,' she replied, 'I love the early summer mornings, and am always out in them, though I have never felt the spur you speak of; if I had to catch my breakfast, to judge by my

usual performance with the fishing-rod, I should be dreadfully hungry before I got it.'

'Heaven forbid, Miss Grace, that you should ever know such straits,' he answered fervently.

'Why not? On the contrary, I have come to the conclusion that it would be better for all of us—just as every German has to be a common soldier—if we had some personal experience of the hard lot that falls to so many of our fellow-creatures. There is nothing like a personal experience for begetting sympathy.'

'No; a hard life would not suit you, or rather, I should say (for I am sure you would bear it bravely), would not be suitable to you. The spectacle of it,' he added gently, 'would, moreover, be distressing to others.'

'And who am I, and what have I done, Mr. Sinclair, that I should be exempt from the common lot of humanity?' she answered, smiling, but with some touch of indignation too. 'Do you picture me as designed by Providence to loll in a carriage and think of everybody on foot as beneath my notice?'

'Oh no, oh no,' he answered softly; 'my view of you is very different. You remember our glorious day last week at Windsor, and how we enjoyed that noble park, which has not its rival, so far as I know, in all the world? Well, to me, Miss Grace, you are very like that park.'

The colour rushed to her cheeks, though she made him a mock courtesy as if at the extravagance of the compliment.

'Oh, I don't mean that way only,' he said simply, 'but in your relation to others. Some of my friends, with whom on most other matters I agree, think that that park is too large a place to be used for what *they* call "ornamental purposes"—a poor phrase, in my opinion, to apply to its historic and native splendours; they want it to be turned into allotments for the benefit of the poor. That might do good to a few people of the present generation and rob all England that is to be of its brightest jewel. *You* would make an excellent allotment, no doubt—I mean, if you had to work for your bread, you would do it better than most young ladies; but it would be a waste of power, just as it would be in me, should I become the great engineer Mr. Allerton is so good as to prophesy, to knock nails in a boiler; while at the same time the effect which you and your surroundings produce upon all beholders would be lost.'

'It seems that my surroundings are of some importance,' she answered drily.

'Not so important as appropriate,' he replied; 'the most beautiful picture owes something to its frame, and may even suffer from bad mounting; you would not have a jewel set in pewter.'

Though he spoke the language of flattery it was without its tone; his air, if an air of any kind could be imputed to him, was one of quiet conviction. Grace resented this exceedingly, though she did not recognise the reason; she had begun to have a greater liking for this jewel set in pewter, or let us say this 'rough diamond,' than she was herself aware of, and to be desirous of his good opinion, but by no means of this sort of homage.

A true woman prefers to be admired for something that belongs to herself, be it ever so small a thing, rather than for the advantages of her position—for her carriage (for instance) rather than for her carriage and horses. She dislikes to be placed on a pinnacle by one for whom she has a genuine regard, because it means isolation. Distance may lend enchantment to the view, but the remark is not flattering to the object.

'I am not accustomed to receive these high-flown compliments, Mr. Sinclair,' she said stiffly.

'If I have offended you let my ignorance plead for me,' he answered humbly. 'As to compliments, I was not aware that I was paying them; and as to high-flown ones, they would be altogether beyond my reach. I need not tell you that I am unaccustomed to the ways of you and yours; still, I should be sorry, very sorry, for you to think me that worst kind of boor who clothes his fustian thought in tinsel.'

'Indeed, indeed, I did not think so.'

'Thanks, Miss Grace. You would not hurt a fly, far less the feelings of a man who (I hope you know) is deeply grateful to you, and who would do all he could to show it.'

'I take your good will for granted,' she answered, smiling, 'but I am at a loss to know in what I have laid you under an obligation.'

'I suppose so,' he answered simply; 'you are as ignorant—it I may once more recur to my unfortunate metaphor—as Windsor Park itself of the benefits you bestow. It is well, no doubt, that it should be so; though, since you take such pleasure in the happiness of others, it seems a pity you should be unaware of

conferring it. To me, Miss Grace, these last few weeks have been the happiest days I ever spent, or ever shall spend.'

He paused and looked at her with such tender earnestness and gratitude that her eyes drooped before his gaze. 'The river life is so pleasant,' she said hurriedly, 'and we have been so fortunate in the weather.'

'Yes; but it seems to me that there would be sunshine in Elm Place even though it were blowing blizzards. Well, that is over,' he added with a sigh, 'and I am come to say good-bye. I return this morning with Mr. Allerton to town.'

She was unaware that any such arrangement had been made, and the news affected her strongly; she felt her heart 'go' in a most unusual manner, and then, like a swimmer who has over-spent himself, sink down, down; she knew that her voice trembled, in spite of all her efforts to keep it calm, as she replied:

'We shall all, I am sure, miss you very much, Mr. Sinclair.'

'That seems to be impossible, though it is pleasant hearing,' he answered gently. 'I am not much accustomed to be missed; and of all the homes in England I should think this one the most independent of a stranger's coming or going.'

How little, she thought, must this man know of her home! But his lack of perception of its true character was a recommendation to her rather than otherwise; it was no want of observation, as she well understood, for he was shrewd enough, that caused his ignorance, but the sense of gratitude for his hospitable reception which had prevented its exercise. She was touched, too, by his humility in the matter, because it was not in accordance with his nature, of which she had made unconscious note.

'I am sorry that you should still consider yourself a stranger to us,' she answered kindly.

'I am endeavouring not to consider myself at all,' he replied impulsively. The words were significant enough, but the tone in which they were uttered bespoke an intense emotion; directly they had left his lips he would have recalled them; the confession of his inmost thought had been rapture to him—a certain desperate wild delight—but he now bitterly accused himself for having expressed it. It was selfish, it was cowardly; it was not in his power, perhaps, to have given his companion pain, but it was evident that he had caused her embarrassment; a silence ensued between them which was more expressive than any commentary. Grace herself felt as if she could have bitten her

tongue out for having given him what must have seemed 'an encouragement,' and was resolved, since he took such advantage of his opportunities, that he should not have another. 'I mean,' he stammered, 'that I shall always think of Elm Place as something apart from the rest of the world, myself included. There are some scenes, as I dare say you have felt, which strike one so by their restful beauty, that when we recall them they seem to have belonged to some other sphere, and to be apart from our personal experience.'

'Really? I have no recollection of any such, but then I have not enjoyed your advantages of travel.'

'My advantages!' he answered bitterly; 'the compulsory wanderings of a vagabond are not generally looked upon in that light. I do not flatter myself for a moment that I shall be remembered here. If one of your sisters should some day say to you, "Do you recollect that uncouth young fellow from America or somewhere who used to visit us when we lived on the river?" and you are so good as to say "Yes," I know I ought to be perfectly satisfied; but on my side my feelings will be very different. I came here utterly unknown to you all, as indeed I still am; I am not such a fool as to suppose that, like Lord Cheribert, I bring my welcome with me, and yet I have been received with the same hospitality and kindness; it is an experience I am not likely to forget, believe me.'

Again his tone, freighted with tenderness and pathos, conveyed infinitely more than his words; his thanks, too, which by rights were due to Miss Agnes as head of the house, seemed to Grace, though he had not actually said so, to be addressed to her personally.

Under ordinary circumstances it would even so have been easy enough for her to acknowledge them; but she found it far from easy. She could not trust her voice to speak for her. Fortunately at that moment Rip came running down the lawn to them, and leapt into her arms.

'Here is one friend who at least should always remember you, Mr. Sinclair.'

'The dear little doggie! Well, even if he owed me something for pulling him out of the lasher, he has since repaid me fifty fold.'

The little creature, if he had but known it, was adding to his obligations now; its dumb caresses reminded the girl of the

moment when she had seen this young fellow leap into the flood to save her favourite, like a river-god, but without the security of his immortality. How nearly he had perished for little Rip's sake—and hers! It was necessary that she should hide her heart indeed from him, since she felt utterly unable to harden it.

'Though I say good-bye, Miss Grace,' he continued after a pause, 'it is not, I am glad to think, for the last time.'

'Indeed?' she smiled and raised her eyebrows, as if in pleased surprise.

'Did you not know,' he stammered, 'that your sister had invited, at least had spoken of there being good fishing in the neighbourhood of your Cumberland home, and kindly expressed a wish that I should try it?'

'To be sure,' she cried; 'I had forgotten.'

His countenance fell, and he turned deadly pale.

It was cruel of her, but not so cruel to him as to herself; for while she thus kept him at arm's length, and further, she was hugging the dog to her bosom for his sake.

'It was only natural you should have done so,' he answered calmly; 'to you it must have seemed so very small a matter; but on my side—as I was just saying—things look so differently. Good-bye, Miss Grace.'

'But will you not breakfast with us?'

'No, thanks, no. I will just go in and take leave of your sisters. Good-bye, little doggie'—he took up the little creature's paw—'I owe you many thanks. Your mistress will not even shake my hand, so I shake yours.'

Grace laughed and put out her hand, which trembled as he took it; 'I do not say good-bye,' she said, 'because it is only, it seems, to be *au revoir*.'

It was not much to say, nor was the manner with which it was said, though gracious, particularly encouraging; but to Walter Sinclair, though there was nothing of exultation in his manner of taking leave, for it was respectful even to reverence, it seemed a great deal, and made a great difference.

CHAPTER XXV.

A DETERMINED SUITOR.

BREAKFAST that morning at Elm Place was even a duller meal than usual. The two elder sisters never seemed to wake up to life till Mr. Roscoe and the rest crossed the river; they sat in sullen silence, save when it was absolutely necessary to speak to one another, and were so studiously and pointedly polite to Grace (to show how they could appreciate a kinswoman worthy of their attention) that she almost wished they had sent her also to Coventry. Nevertheless, she always did her best to keep up the conversation, though it was like playing lawn tennis alone against a double. But this morning, somehow, she was not equal to the strain. The words Walter Sinclair had spoken to her with such passionate energy, 'I am endeavouring not to think of myself at all,' were still ringing in her ears; she had recognised their meaning, but not what had caused their utterance; if he had said, 'I am endeavouring not to think of *you*,' he could hardly have expressed himself more plainly. And why should he endeavour not to think of her? At the moment this question, which had naturally suggested itself, had filled her with vague suspicions of him. There had been that in his manner which she could not mistake for mere friendship—a tenderness, hidden by the veil of an exaggerated admiration, or forcibly repressed. The idea of the difference of their positions, as regarded wealth, never entered into her mind, and would have seemed to her, had it done so, to be the last to enter into his; she did not understand how independence of character could be associated with a humility born of convention—it was more probable that there were other and far stronger reasons for his reticence. As he had said himself, he was a stranger to them still; concealment, indeed, of any kind, seemed foreign to his character; but, for all she knew about him, he might have been a married man: the idea was abhorrent to her, and had been dismissed at once, for, in truth, she believed him incapable of a baseness, but there was certainly *something* that tied his tongue. Moreover, with the inconsistency of her sex, she resented his having spoken to her even as he had done, upon so short an acquaintance, and on such very slight encouragement. It had therefore come to pass that she had 'snubbed' him—or (as it now appeared to her) had treated him with unne-

cessary and uncalled-for harshness. To pretend to have forgotten that he had been invited to come to the North, had been in particular, she felt, a piece of wanton cruelty; and his humble reply, 'It was only natural you should have forgotten,' was as an arrow that had gone home to her very heart. She had, it was true, at parting, shown that she took it for granted they were to meet again, but she had not even expressed a wish that they should do so, as she would have done to any ordinary guest; and now, alas! she knew the reason why. He had not been an ordinary guest, but one that her heart had been entertaining in its inmost chamber, unawares, and she had only discovered it when it was too late. After such a dismissal, it was hardly likely that he would risk a second one, and it was probable that she had lost him for ever. It was no wonder that her heart was heavy within her and her tongue slow to speak. She found balm, however, in a Gilead where she least expected it, and where the soil did not often produce that commodity.

'So you had your "good-bye" from Mr. Sinclair on the camp-shed, I suppose, Grace?' said Miss Agnes; 'I hope he was as effusive as he was to us.'

'He seemed very grateful for such hospitality as we were able to show him,' answered Grace gently.

'Grateful! I never had my hand so squeezed before!' continued Agnes; 'one would have thought I had given him a thousand pounds.'

Philippa broke into a little laugh, not, it is to be feared, at the pleasantry, which, indeed, was hardly deserving of it, so much as at the want of experience in hand-squeezing to which the speaker had so imprudently confessed.

'However, he is an honest young fellow,' continued Agnes, 'and I was glad to hear him renew his promise of looking in upon us at Halswater.'

For this good news, had it not been for the presence of her other sister, and from fear that the action might be imputed to an association of ideas, Grace could have thrown her arms round Agnes's neck and kissed her.

'We are going to lose Mr. Allerton this morning also,' observed Philippa, 'and in the afternoon Lord Cheribert. It is very inconsiderate of the gentlemen thus to desert us all together.'

'Is Lord Cheribert going?' inquired Grace with interest.

'Yes; did you not know it?'

The two elder ladies exchanged significant glances; the 'little affairs' of their younger sister were common ground, and almost the only ones on which they could meet without bickering.

'No, I did not know it,' said Grace. 'We shall miss him very much.'

'You did not favour Mr. Sinclair, my dear, with that expression of your regret,' observed Agnes slyly.

'We have known Lord Cheribert longer,' replied Grace innocently, but blushing to her ear-tips.

'To be sure; I suppose we have seen him twice before,' remarked Philippa with quiet enjoyment, 'which, of course, makes a great difference.'

Grace felt that her sisters were amusing themselves at her expense, but bore it with great sweetness, and the more easily since, with all their sagacity, it was clear that they were altogether on a false scent. It was not in human nature to resist leading them a little farther astray.

'I suppose Lord Cheribert is going simply because he is tired of us,' she observed with a little pout; 'there can be no business to demand his attention.'

'Well, it isn't exactly business, of course, my dear,' said Agnes soothingly; 'but you know how he is wedded—for the present—to sporting affairs; it is to keep some appointment at a steeplechase, I believe, that he is obliged to be away. But it is to be his last appearance in the saddle; after which he will be reconciled to his father, and assume his proper position in the world.'

'When, I suppose, we shall never see him again,' observed Grace with a little sigh.

'That remains to be proved, my dear,' said Agnes encouragingly. 'Like Mr. Sinclair, he has *promised*, you know, to come and see us at Halswater. It would be only civil, by the bye, if you were to remind him of it; then, if he *does* come, we shall know the reason, shall we not?'

'We shall be able, at all events, to make a tolerable guess at it,' smiled her sister.

Like a general whose courage has carried him too far into the enemy's country, Grace would have been now very ready to retreat from the position whither her little joke had carried her, when, fortunately, she was released by the arrival of the subject of their conversation, in company with Mr. Roscoe, by boat. Mr. Allerton

had sent his apologies for not taking leave in person; he had overslept himself, and had no time to spare to catch the train for town. The shadow of departure seemed to sit upon Lord Cheribert's face; he was so much more silent than usual that Agnes rallied him upon it.

'How could it be otherwise,' he said gently, 'since I too am leaving Elm Place? We are like boys whose holiday is over and are going back to work.'

'Yet somebody has just been saying that your life is all holiday,' observed Agnes, laughing.

'Indeed! I am afraid she meant, however, all idleness, which is something very different,' answered the young man gravely; he did not look towards Grace, but she knew that he attributed the remark to herself, and would have given much to have been able to disclaim it. She would have, somehow, preferred that he should not take notice of her at all that morning.

This, however, was not to be. Agnes soon left the room, on pretence of some matters of the house requiring her attention, and Philippa took Mr. Roscoe out with her upon the lawn, perhaps without design (for she never lost an opportunity of being alone with him), but after what her sisters had been saying to Grace, it had an uncomfortable sense to her of design. Lord Cheribert and herself were thus left alone.

'As it is my last morning, Miss Grace,' he said with his pleasant smile, but in a tone much more serious than usual, 'might I ask a favour of you?' Before she could reply (a circumstance for which she felt strangely thankful) he added, 'It is only that we should take that walk on the hill together which we took when I first came.'

She answered, as lightly as she could, 'By all means,' and put on her hat, which 'on the river' ladies have never to go far for. As they left the house she stopped to call the dog—a natural action enough, but one which she had never before felt so impelled to do; it was extraordinary how much dearer Rip had grown to be to her within the last hour.

'How fond you are of that little creature! it ought to be a happy doggie,' said Lord Cheribert.

'I don't know about that; but he likes, I think, to be with me—"the off-and-on companion of my walks," as Wordsworth calls it.'

'I wish I was good at poetry,' sighed the young man; 'but, unfortunately, I am good at nothing.'

'I should be sorry to think that, Lord Cheribert.'

'But you *do* think it; how can it be otherwise? Not that I mind your doing it—that is, of course, I wish I were more worthy of your good opinion; but I had rather be brought to book by you—by Jove, I would—than praised by other people!'

'I was really not aware that I had ever "brought you to book," as you call it, Lord Cheribert. I suppose it's a sporting expression.'

'Don't laugh at me, please, Miss Grace,' he answered humbly; 'scold me as much as you please—it does me good; but don't laugh at me.'

'It is rather difficult to help it, when you talk of my doing you good.'

'Ah, but you do. No one in the world has ever done it but you. Schoolmasters have tried it, dons have tried it, the governor has tried it; but they might just as well have thrown water on a duck's back. I was dry the next moment. But from the day I first saw you—no, the day you had the kindness to talk to me in this very place—Heaven knows how long ago, but it seems a century——'

'That is not very complimentary to your entertainers at Elm Place,' she put in quietly.

'Now, you are laughing again at me; I don't think you would do it if you knew how cruel it was. What I mean is, not that the time has been heavy on my hands here, Heaven knows, but that what has happened to me seems more important than all that has happened anywhere else. I feel as if half my life has been passed here and half elsewhere; and the two halves have been so different!'

He paused and she said 'Yes?'—a ridiculous and ineffectual monosyllable, as she was well aware; but what *was* she to say? His manner was so earnest, his tone so tender, his look so beseeching, that she could hardly believe it was Lord Cheribert.

'There is a verse, I know not from what author, the governor used to be fond of quoting to me on a Sunday,' he continued, "Between the stirrup and the ground, mercy I sought, mercy I found"—a religious version, I suppose, of "It's never too late to mend," and one, I conclude, which he thought especially applicable to me as a racing man. If Providence is really so kind to a sinner, cannot you also hold out some hope to him?'

They were standing on a spur of the hill, with the wood at their back and a great expanse of landscape beneath them; the river with its fairy fleet winding for miles till it shrank to a thread; men and women at their labour in the fields; cattle in their pasture; but not a sound came up to them. The world seemed to be lying at their feet, but they too far removed from it. It was a scene one of them never forgot.

‘It is not to an ignorant girl like me that you should apply, Lord Cheribert, in such matters as you speak of; they are altogether too high for me. I can only say with one of the greatest of our fellow-creatures on his deathbed, “Be a good man; nothing else can comfort you.”’

‘That is all that I want you to say, Grace, provided only that you will teach me to be one. Priests are no use to me. It is from you alone that I have learnt to understand my own worthlessness. My fate is in your hands.’

‘In *mine*, my lord?’ she answered with a faint pretence of misunderstanding him. ‘What would you have me do?’

‘Give me your love; or, if that is impossible, as indeed it well may be at present, give me hope. I can be patient enough with such a prize in view, and though I shall never be worthy of it, I will try, every day and every hour, to make myself more so. You see, dear Grace’—here he smiled so brightly that it seemed hard indeed to say him nay—‘I have so many advantages on my side; every step which is not astray, and of which other men would have nothing to congratulate themselves upon, will be to me a clear gain; I have been, until I knew you, so exceedingly disreputable. You may say, indeed,’ he continued cheerfully, ‘that that of itself is no recommendation; but when you see me or hear of me becoming more and more as you would wish me to be, and know that it is all your doing, you will begin to take just a little pride in me, as in the work of your own hands. When people ask me, as they will be sure to do, what is the meaning of this reformation, I shall tell them—but gently and not passionately—to mind their own business, until I have your permission to explain matters; for a day will come—I feel sure of it—when you will not be ashamed of acknowledging me as your disciple; a day when my father will ask me in his solemn way, “What has snatched you like a brand from the burning?” and I shall reply to him in his own language, “Grace.”’

‘Lord Cheribert,’ replied the girl, with dignity, ‘if it were

anyone but yourself who is thus speaking to me, I should say that it was impossible that what you express so lightly could be seriously intended.'

'It's my unfortunate way of speaking,' interposed the young man humbly. 'I am—that is, I used to be—frivolity itself, I know; but it's only manner.'

'I am aware of it. I also feel that it would be quite inconsistent with your nature to give anyone, designedly, a moment's pain. It would give *me* pain—very great distress of mind, Lord Cheribert—to discuss the matter which you have so unexpectedly forced upon my attention.'

'Forced! Good Heavens!' A look of unutterable sorrow crossed the young man's face.

'Forgive me; I was unnecessarily harsh. I wanted to stop you. The thought of your father—since you have mentioned him—ought, in my opinion, to have kept you silent. I know little of the world's ways; but setting all other objections, even more important, though not less grave, aside, can it be imagined for a moment that your father would approve of what you have just been saying?'

'My father!' he exclaimed contemptuously; 'What can he give me in place of you that I should consult his wishes? What has he ever done for me that can be matched with what *you* have done? What is he in my eyes as compared with you? Nothing, and less than nothing.'

'You ought to be ashamed to say so, Lord Cheribert,' she answered indignantly. '*My* father is dead, yet his memory is a more sacred thing than any living man can give me. You talk of reformation, but it seems to me that reformation, like charity, should begin at home.'

'You are right, Grace; you are always right,' returned the young man with an air of quiet conviction. 'I will be dutiful to him, because you tell me it is my duty, and therefore it must be so. His consent shall be obtained, at whatever price. My pride shall bend its neck, and he shall put his foot upon it.'

'But that is only one thing, Lord Cheribert, and not the greatest thing, that puts a barrier between you and me.'

She spoke with firmness, even with vigour; but at the same time she recognised her mistake in having permitted herself, even for a moment, to be drawn into a discussion of details. The determination in his face, which had suddenly become cold and calm, as though it had been hewn in marble, appalled her.

'That I can easily believe, dear Grace,' he answered gently. 'No one can expect to get to heaven express and without stoppages. If you will be kind enough to mention your objections, I will tick them off on my fingers—or, if you will permit me, what will be far better, on yours—and answer them, one after another, as well as I can.'

It was very difficult to deal with such a lover; passionate as Rousseau, resolute as Wellington, but in manner a *farceur*. It was as natural to Lord Cheribert to be droll in the most serious situations as for a dull man to be serious in a droll one. Like a planet (which was also, alas! a falling star), he dwelt in an atmosphere of his own, which, while by no means one of mere persiflage, was of exceeding levity.

'I will mention one obstacle to your suit, since you compel me to do so,' answered Grace gravely, 'which, I am sure you will agree with me, can leave no more to be said. I am deeply touched by the honour you have done me, and I shall never cease to be your friend and well-wisher; but I do not love you, Lord Cheribert.'

He bit his lip and turned a little pale, then smiled again as pleasantly as ever.

'It would be quite beyond my utmost expectations if you did, dear Grace,' he answered gently; 'but I have—as regards yourself at least—a plentiful stock of patience, and an immense reserve of what our friends call obstinacy and ourselves resolution. You shall teach me everything else, and I will teach you to love me.'

'It is impossible, my lord; I shall never learn that lesson.'

He looked at her for a moment in silence; the dog came barking from the wood, and ran to its mistress, who took it up in her arms. For the first time Lord Cheribert's pleasant face was clouded with a frown.

'Perhaps,' he said, 'you have learnt it already from some other teacher? That is a question which, if you could read my heart, you would not refuse to answer; my *life* hangs on it.'

She buried her face in that of her little favourite to hide the flush that overspread her cheeks.

'I must have your "yes" or "no," Grace,' he continued with tender earnestness. 'Are you engaged to another man?'

She looked up at him haughtily, almost defiantly.

'No, I am not, my lord; but that can make no difference.'

The young man uttered a sigh of relief: then broke into a

laugh full of joyful music. 'Oh, but indeed it does,' he said; 'if you did but know how happy that reply has made me, you would never have the heart to take such happiness away. Do not spoil it by another word. I ask for nothing more—just now. You see how easily I am satisfied—which is a great recommendation in a husband.'

'My lord——'

'There now, I have angered you. Forgive me. Rip, you rascal, of whom I feel so jealous, ask your dear mistress to forgive me. It is the very last peccadillo of a lifetime. Let us change the subject and talk of something else. Which do you like best, Miss Grace, the river or the mountain, Elm Place or the Fells? Your sisters—and here they come with Roscoe the Inseparable—have recommended me to try the fishing in Halswater. I shall shortly, therefore, have the pleasure of meeting you again.'

'Believe me, Lord Cheribert, it will be useless,' she answered hastily, for the others were approaching them.

'I shall come if I am alive,' he answered quietly. 'Miss Tremenhere, what a view you have here! I cannot believe, for all you tell me, that your Cumberland home can show a finer.'

'I hope you will come, then, and judge for yourself, as you have half promised to do, Lord Cheribert,' said Agnes graciously.

'Half promised? Indeed I have whole promised,' returned the young man cheerfully. 'There is nothing which I look forward to with greater pleasure. I know when I am well off (it's a long time since I *have* been well off, as Roscoe knows), and if I have the same good time at Halswater as I have had at Elm Place, I shall have reason, indeed, to congratulate myself.'

(To be continued.)

LONGSHORE MEMORIES.

YOU may know a marshman—or a man of the ‘mashes,’ as he is locally termed—wherever you chance to come across him, by the way he grasps his stick. In his native marshes it was rather a pole than a stick that he carried—one about as thick as your wrist and pointed at its stoutest end. As a rule, a ‘mashbird’ has a grave demeanour, and very deliberate he is in action. At the same time, he is hot-tempered, and, if roused suddenly, becomes as quick of motion as one of his own dyke eels.

In my time the dwellers in the marshlands were a distinct race, quite apart from the people of the inland towns, whom they always styled ‘furriners.’ That long monotonous belt of land just within the sea-wall would have ill-suited people used to social gatherings. As a rule, a man’s companions were his gun and fishing-net. Our longshore shooters had, many of them, to trudge three or four miles night and morning to get to their fishing or shooting grounds. A man living only a mile away was looked on as quite a near neighbour.

Any active religious feeling amongst our folks was mostly of a gloomy character, or, at any rate, stern and uncompromising. Their surroundings and solitary occupations fostered this. They were very much in earnest; revival meetings were frequently held on our flats which would quite eclipse any of later days. True, they had no organ or harmonium, but the wild roaring of the wind and the fierce rush of the tide made a fitting accompaniment to the loud rude eloquence of our local preachers, the sobs and groans of the penitent, and the noisy hallelujahs of demonstrative believers.

The number of churches along the shore was remarkable, considering the thinly scattered population, but I fear the number of the orthodox faithful was very small. My own people were attached to the ‘Hew Agag in pieces’ school, and, as a rule, I was taken to hear their favourite preachers. I remember well the fervour with which these depicted the horrors of the infernal regions, to the edification of such as had scapegoats, as they always called the scapegraces of their families—possibly with more truth than they imagined. As a boy, I have shivered with fear and perspired in real agony under some of these discourses.

So much preaching did I get in my youth, and so much fish diet, that I did not take kindly to either as a man.

The simple arts of reading and writing were highly valued; those mothers and fathers who could read and write taught their own children and those of their less gifted neighbours during the long winter evenings. A man or woman who could read a six-weeks-old newspaper to the neighbours, and write a letter for them at intervals few and far between, was much looked up to and respected. A book, especially if it was illustrated, would be lent for miles round, and when, through constant wear and tear, it began to go, it was stitched and pasted in wonderful fashion.

Little in the way of fine art reached us, beyond the gay pictures on the top of the pretty fruit and glove boxes brought by those young sailors who had visited France or Holland for their mothers or sweethearts. But though our folks had small book knowledge, they learned much from nature direct. The four seasons brought to them little variation; one year was to them the same as another. In spring the waders wakened up the flats to life again, when they nested in their wonted grounds. The pewits ran about, taking little heed of man, woman, or child. One of their favourite breeding stations, I remember, was close to the most frequented track of the flats.

The boys would give you the action of the snipe in breeding-time, as he mounts up piping, or, as they termed it, 'whinnying,' as well as the humming sound he makes in his descent. The action of the birds' wings they would make with the hands, as they imitated the bleat and the hum to the life. All the various cries and motions of the wildfowl they were familiar with, from the quick, rocket-like spring of the teal to the heavy flap of the wild swan rising from the water; from the little grebe to the great sprat diver, they knew them all.

The mimicry or pantomimic gesture with the fingers was peculiar to the people of the flats. It was most faithful to nature. All the haunts of the fowl we boys used to visit. To this day there is a favourite breeding spot of that long-legged screamer, the redshank, which I have known all my life. It is close to a large shipbuilding yard, within sound of the busy clang of the workmen. There the wild birds still 'nide,' as we used to say, each season, and there, in safety, a whole company of couples still rear their young among the wiry sea-grass, high and dry above high-water mark. At other times they are the wildest of all their tribe.

Many a time have I tried to get curlews by paddling up a water run, or gully, worn by the rush of the tide, gun in hand and clothes nowhere. Just as I reckoned I was drawing nigh for the shot, up would nip Master Redshank, just out of pure cussedness, yelping and screaming, and up got the curlews too. Oh, the misery and sickening sensation I used to feel at being defeated by that red-legged wader! After getting half plastered over with ooze mud too!—which sticketh much closer than the nearest of brothers; and, of all abominations that may be classed as odorous, commend me to ooze mud.

Summer comes, and then the longshore dwellers live for a time in the blessed sunlight. Marsh hay is mown or cut; the lush grass and other vegetation peculiar to the flats make fodder and litter for the stock in winter. After that follows reed-cutting; the beautiful tasselled reed is valuable for many purposes. The marshman has his gun with him as well as his hook or stake. No matter where he may be, or how occupied, he never lets his gun go far from his hand: 'Ye never knows what ye'r goin' to run aginist,' he will tell you.

It is a splendid sight, that of these flats covered with a luxuriant vegetation, when the afternoon sun lights all up and a gentle breeze from off the water—just enough to make the rich grass sway a little—gives the wide expanse the appearance of a glorious inland sea of many colours, belted round in the distance by the woods at the foot of the uplands. One drawback there is to all this beauty; as I have said before, the bailiffs of marshland take heavy dues; ague and intermittent fever are rife. It is a sad sight to see a powerful man shaking like a leaf and his teeth chattering in his head on the hottest days of midsummer. The day for that is nearly over now though, for the flats have been drained. If modern improvements have swept away many of the joys of our youth they have brought compensations. If our folks smuggled in those days, who could blame them? Brandy was often of vital importance; spirit in some shape or other all of them had, either in the house or outside it. Laudanum, too, in considerable quantities—what most people would consider most dangerous quantities. Now and again a few of the marshmen from the Essex side would come over to settle amongst us—a rare circumstance and matter of conversation all over the flats. Still more rarely one would come from the fens of Lincoln, Cambridge, or Norfolk, with tales of marshes in comparison with which our own dwindled down into mere splashes. As a boy, I listened with

awe to the accounts such 'furriners' gave of their watery wildernesses. The dwellers on the flats still talk of their home as the 'mashes,' though the lands are now drained and the wildfowl visit them no more.

There was a foreign element in the people; the women showed it more frequently than the men did. Their dark hair and eyes, together with warm olive complexions, told their own tale. Finer looking men and women than some of these you could not find. Tough as pin-wire too; had their constitutions been weak they could ill have stood the deadly cold of winter and the hot moist air of summer. As it was, a great proportion of the deaths were from drowning.

How well I remember that bright summer morning when a party of our young fellows left the village for a swim. The tide was up; the bright water glittered in the sunlight and the larks sang loudly all over the flats; the air seemed full of them. Like so many water spaniels, the boys took the water, and one, bolder than the rest, made for mid-channel, breasting it bravely. Sharp and loud over the water comes a cry for help; cramp has seized the brave swimmer. At their utmost speed his companions make for him. 'Tear through it boys, or he's done for!'

A boat is put out from the side of a ship at anchor. 'Give way, lads, smart!' and the boat shoots through the water at racing pace, the oars going like clockwork. 'Bend to it, lads; he's down for the second time!' No need to urge them, they are pulling for life.

The swimmers know that the boat will reach him first, but, with their hearts in their mouths, on they swim.

He shows for the last time. 'Pull, lads, we shall have him; one more spurt for the love of God!' Too late. 'Well rowed, lads! try the grapples!' shouts one of the swimmers. But the tide has carried him no one knows where now. And the seaman's practised eye telling him the swimmers are well-nigh exhausted, he bids them get into the boat quick. On reaching the shore they put on their clothes with heavy hearts, and ask who will carry the tidings to his mother. The ringleader in all their mad freaks and pranks—the boldest and most venturesome of the party—is asked to do it; but, with hot tears in his eyes, he refuses. She got the news quickly enough, poor soul, for a little lad who had been minding our clothes, ran home in a fit of terror, telling every one he met on his way up the street, that poor Ned was drowned. 'Ah,' says one of the old fishermen, 'I knows where

the tide 'ull take him to when it turns—to the big sluice it 'ull take him, see if it don't.'

We shudder as we think of the place, with its massive piles and gates covered with sea-weeds and tangle; a place you would not want to look at twice, when the tide was out. Imagine a gully twelve feet deep, reaching to the base of the sea wall; the sides of it for a long distance lined with great piles—trees pointed at one end and driven down into the ooze thirty feet or more. Even with these you could see the rush and wear of the tide; a grim place to look at! likely to give you the nightmare. At low water you could see great eels twisting about, and crabs, those useful but ferocious scavengers, scuttling about sideways, in search of food. A gruesome place shunned by all of us lads, especially at night, bold though we were; for we knew what had been found there more than once.

About two hours after the tide had gone down the heavy tread of fishermen in their great boots rang on the pavement. They had found him in the big sluice. From that time we avoided the spot more than ever. To this day memory brings the picture of it all often vividly before my eyes.

Autumn seems a short season to longshore dwellers; early winter they may call it more fitly. They take notice of the wild-fowls' flight then. If these shift about and are restless the marshman judges there will be unsettled weather, and he looks carefully at his reed-thatched house, if he lives in some nook or corner of the flats. He takes precautions that would seem strange to dwellers in towns, and prepares for the worst.

His long duck-gun in hand he is a human wader, and he moves over the flats with the deliberation of one of his own Jack Herns. But like the heron's his movements are quick enough when his time comes. See him after a winged curlew on the flats—not on the ooze—and you will wonder at his speed. Anyone who has chased a curlew with just its wing crippled, not broken, will know what I mean. Very rarely will the bird escape our 'mashman.'

A curious thing happened when I was a boy, which I have never seen mentioned anywhere. Hundreds of French partridges came to our shore from seawards, and there dropped and lay exhausted. Some of our folks filled baskets full with them before they could recover sufficiently to get inland. They were in prime condition. That was in the afternoon; the next day not a single bird of that species could be found. Some way or other they had certainly made a mistake in their reckonings. A calm day it was,

too, without any wind. That summer was a glorious one; many of the migrating birds stayed very late. Some bitterns were shot—the ‘yaller French hems’—so called because they were rather common on the Essex coast and some portions of the Kentish flats at the time we were at war with France, or, as our old folks said, ‘that year we fit Old Boney.’

Spots such as that called ‘the Marsh Fleet’ are fast vanishing day by day. It lay in Kent, close to the Essex shore.

As we near the Fleet, or lagoon, for such it really is, the sun floods the whole extent of marsh and distant shore in a soft golden light. The cattle and the sheep look almost twice their natural size as they stand or lie half hidden in the long lush vegetation. Sails of vessels show in fine contrast to the green of the flats—some a flash of warm yellow, others gleaming red in the sun. The craft make their way slowly along, shadow after shadow falling on their broad sails as they pass or near each other. Most of them are barges making for the mouth of the Thames or the Medway. This lagoon is fringed with a belt of high reeds and rushes for some distance out. By careful management it is possible to squeeze into them without getting fast in the mud; but you must step on the matted roots—break through them, and there is no saying where you will go.

We have only made our way a few yards when the birds let us know that we are trespassing. Reed sparrows, or wrens, as they are called, chide and chatter, running up the reed stems in a most distracted manner, for close to my face are one or two of their nests. How deep that mud is we have no means of knowing. Once I made a practical guess at it to my sorrow. Decayed water-plants have left their remains there year after year; matter has been deposited from the water itself—all forming a light flooring of unknown depth. The reed-cutters will drop their long ash poles which they use to work their punts with, and show you how far down it will go with a simple pressure of the hands.

But changes have come over our flats, and time has made a difference to all our longshore dwellers. One place, once a celebrated resort of wildfowl, is now a fruit orchard; and a part of the shore frequented by sanderlings and dotterels, each in their season, is now covered with fine houses, forming a marine parade.

And so our longshore shooter’s occupation is gone, and, if he would earn a living, he must often take to very different work, to wit, the drainage of his much-loved marshes.

THE TAKING OF OSMAN OGLOU.

THE long hot day was over at last, and with it Osman Oglo's career of crime. The *cadi's* mind (if it were worthy the name) was made up; the witnesses, Kurds and Yuruks of the Taurus, with keen cruel eyes and matted hair, Turcoman women, whose unwilling testimony had been wrung, syllable by syllable, from shrouded lips, voluble Armenians or cringing Greeks, in all the filthy glory of Frank attire, whispered together or looked stolidly at nothing, according as they had borne false witness against or for the prisoner. The Armenian clerk surveyed the scene with that mixture of ineffable contempt and watchful servility which characterises his race in the land of bondage; the perspiring faces which obstructed the little light and air which might have entered by the doorway lighted up with the faintest gleam of interest; and the ragged *zaptiehs* roused themselves and edged nearer to Osman. There had never been any real doubt as to the result; and when the *cadi*, with many a pious parenthesis and circumlocutory formula, had delivered himself of the expected sentence of imprisonment for life—or rather, as all knew, for death—no one, not excepting the prisoner, showed the faintest spark of emotion. True, he turned his head a moment, as the *zaptiehs* were hustling him away, and glanced at one of a knot of peasant women, now beginning to make their way out of the court with *yashmaks* drawn tight over their heads, and held together at the chin; but the old woman's eyes did not meet his, and, drawing the veil closer over her mouth, she passed on with bowed head among the crowd; while the weary *zaptiehs*, admonishing the most obvious portions of Osman's person with the butts of their *Winchesters*, pressed out of the court by another door.

Perhaps Osman Oglo was thinking that, as things went in Karamania, he had not much to complain of. For ten long years no ruffian had been a greater terror than he to the travelling merchant, to his Imperial Highness the Sultan's post, or the officials of the *Régie*; and tales of his huge strength, his daring, his brutality, were household words in all the vilayet of Konieh: how he and his band had captured the former *cadi* of *Selefkeh* himself, and by smearing him daily with petroleum and dancing

round him with lighted torches, had extorted six hundred Turkish pounds from the old man's abject terror; how all who had a quarrel with constituted authority had found in him their ready ally. But this wild freedom was over now, and, as he walked doggedly out of the court, his whole mien was that of one who had been beaten at last in a long and equal struggle with fate, and the tired zaptiehs felt that their old enemy would trouble them no more, as they slouched along the crumbling bank of the Calycadnus towards the prison where Osman was to lie this night before being transferred to the capital of the vilayet on the morrow.

The short twilight of the south was already passing into dark, and the swollen current of the river in which Barbarossa lost his life made a dreary music as it chafed the piers of the Selefkeh bridge. The court had sat so much later than usual, that only a small throng of loafers and beggars followed the four zaptiehs and their prisoner, keeping up a continual clamour of coarse banter, and approaching as near to the notorious Osman as the two guards who walked behind him would allow. But he took no notice; the game was up, and his head only sank lower on his breast as the little procession neared its goal. No way disheartened however by the immobility of the prisoner, the tail kept up the constant strain of badinage, most conspicuous in gibe and retort being a squalid old hunchback, with head enveloped in the filthy green turban which marks the Prophet's myriad and disreputable kinsfolk, and a patch, hardly to be distinguished from the browned and grimy skin, covering one eye—a fair specimen of the sturdy beggar who may be seen in any Eastern town. He seemed a man of some rude wit, and for its exercise selected a squat porter, who, having no job on hand, had followed in the ruck of the zaptiehs to gaze like the rest on so public a character as Osman. The day had been hot, and perhaps want of employment had ruffled the porter's temper, and ribald jests, each more obscene than the last, passed between the pair until, as the procession reached a point where the path narrowed and the stream swirled deep and fast below a low earthy cliff, a more than usually grave reflection on the porter's maternal ancestry exhausted his slender store of patience, and, springing with a curse on the hunchback, he rolled over with him in the dust, amid the loud jeers of the rest. The two hindmost zaptiehs turned and struck at the combatants with the butts of their rifles, when, quick as thought, the prisoner hurled himself on the guard upon his left, pinned him in his

mighty arms, and staggered forward over the low cliff. With a yell of consternation the other three ran down the bank, ready to shoot as soon as Osman's head should emerge from the rapid stream; but the brigand and the zaptieh rose locked together, at some distance from the shore, and three bullets whizzed at the struggling heads, already scarcely distinguishable in the gathering gloom. They sank again, and were seen no more, and not till then did the distracted zaptiehs turn to look for the combatants who had been the indirect cause of this grievous hap. The porter was still sitting on the ground in an agony of perspiration and terror, but the hunchback had vanished.

Ridge upon ridge behind Selefkeh rises the Taurus, curving back from the sea in a vast crescent, of which Cape Annamur is the one horn and Mount Amanus the other. No peak breaks the even mass piled up against the skyline, but the mountains rise step by step, evenly as a mighty staircase, to the stony plateau which crowns the whole—an arid desert seamed by rocky ridges like the bones of Mother Earth picked bare. But before the traveller reaches this waste he passes through a very paradise of vegetation, fed the whole summer long by the morning mists of which the mountains rob the lowlands, and basking in the heat reflected from the great wall behind. Here in a succession of cañons, leading into the heart of the ridge, flourishes a dense forest of flowering thorns, arbutus, acacia, and trees peculiar to sub-tropic regions, but at home in this comparatively northern latitude thanks to the concentrated heat in these sheltered clefts. Above the forest rise on either hand the perpendicular walls of grey rock, and cleft opens out of cleft in an endless labyrinth, untenanted by man, and trodden only by wandering shepherds, whose goats force their way with a noisy jangle of bells through the dense underwood.

To the remotest recesses of this secure retreat Osman had betaken himself after crawling from the river some five hundred yards below the point where he had dived for the second time. When he first rose he had taken good care to keep the struggling zaptieh between himself and the shore, and in the latter's head and back had lodged two of the three bullets fired at random from the bank; the third missed altogether, and when Osman came again to the surface the rapid stream had carried him out into the darkness. But he had had a hard struggle, powerful swimmer as he was, to gain the other bank, and, but for

the malaria mist which overhung the marshy country beyond, must have been taken by the patrols before reaching the hills. But crawling from point to point, now lying still in a clump of maize to listen for any sound but the gurgling of the runnels or the heavy breathing of the wallowing buffaloes, now sinking up to his waist in the oozy pools, he had gained the limits of the forest, and thence by many a circuitous route, unknown to any but such as he, had made his way to a solitary hut, built long ago of wattles and fern by some shepherd. Here he proposed to lie quiet, feeding on roots or wild fruits till such time as the supine police should get tired of their hunt and the patrols be recalled—a consummation which he knew well would ensue in a week or two at most. Till then it was no great hardship, after months in the pestilential prison where he had lain before his trial, to be out here in the cañon, drinking the pure spring water, searching for roots and berries, and now and then snaring a bird or a hare to vary the monotony of vegetarian diet.

He was lying at the mouth of a little cave on the evening of the sixth day after his escape, meditating on the possibility of getting his band together again and resuming operations in some other part of Anatolia, when the train of his thoughts was broken by the distant sound of something pushing its way through the brushwood. In a moment the hunted look returned to his eyes, and clutching a large stone with his right hand, he crawled cautiously forward to the edge of the rocky shelf below his cave, and lying flat on his stomach peered into the tree-tops below. Nearer and nearer came the sound, and tighter and tighter Osman clutched the stone, his only weapon, until, emerging from the brake immediately underneath him, a tall Greek stood full in view panting for breath. A moment's intense scrutiny, and Osman, relaxing his hold on the stone, bounded down the slope to meet him.

'So it was thou, Dimitri,' he cried, seizing him by both hands before the Greek could finish his low salaam, 'it was thou who hast given me back freedom and life! By the beard of my father, it was long before I recognised thee in the court, with that lump on thy back and the patch over thine eye. But, by Allah, thou hast repaid me nobly for the life I gave thee seven years ago, when I took thee from the midst of the pasha's guards; dost thou remember?'

'Can the child forget its mother, or the servant his master?' answered the Greek, bending gratefully to kiss the hands which

held his. 'But how did my lord escape from the swift waters and come hither?'

'Allah, the compassionate, upheld me,' said Osman, and leading Dimitri up the slope to the cave, told him briefly the course of events after the plunge into the Calycadnus. 'But,' he concluded, 'thou must tell me how it fared also with thee.'

'I have nothing to tell,' replied the other quickly. 'I ran down the nearest alley while those dogs were shouting and looking for thee, and lay in the house of Hussein Mustapha for a night and a day, till it was safe to come up to thy mother's village. From her I heard where thou wert likely to have gone, and I would have brought thee meat and news two days ago but that the patrols were out night and day; but see, I have brought thee bread at last,' he added, drawing from under his capote a parcel of unleavened Yuruk bread and dried meat, which the hunted man seized and began to eat ravenously. Suddenly he stopped and turned to Dimitri, whose eyes followed his every movement.

'And thy news? What of her—my mother? Quick—speak!' 'What! have they killed her because they could not get me? Speak!' he cried vehemently, 'for, by the head of Allah—'

'Nay, not yet,' interposed Dimitri hastily, 'not yet, but likely enough before long; for they came to thy village before the sun was set on the day after thine escape, and the binbashi himself broke into thy mother's house and tore the veil from her face because she would not say where thou wast to be found.' He paused and seemed to watch the effects of his words on the dark face of Osman. Presently he continued: 'And still she would not speak. Then he bade them tear the garments from her shoulders.'

'And they beat her?' groaned Osman.

'How can I tell all to my lord?' said the Greek in a low voice. 'Yes, they beat her in the presence of all, and her blood ran on the ground; and yet she spake not a word of thee. How can I tell more?'

Again he paused, and for a moment the brigand sat motionless; then, rising to his feet, he cursed with a frantic brutality, from which even Dimitri, old comrade in crime that he was, shrank appalled, all who had dared to lay a hand upon his mother, and finally swore by the beard of Allah himself to deal with them even as he would deal some day with the dog who had sold him to the pasha's soldiers five months ago, if he ever succeeded in

finding out who had been his betrayer. For some minutes there was silence, broken at last by the Greek:

'One thing more I must tell thee. The mother of my lord herself said: "Go, tell this to my son. Behold, I have been beaten with rods in the presence of the men, and my veil has been plucked from my face for thy sake. Thus spoke the binbashi also to me, "If thou tellest not the secret of thy son before three days are past I will lodge thee where thou art little like to see his face again." Come if thou canst to-morrow, two hours before sunrise, to the fountain which is near the cave of the rocks above the village, that I may see thee and talk with thee. The patrols are gone in again to the town, and thou canst come if thou wilt." Thus spake the mother of my lord to her servant.'

Osman pondered a moment; then, taking the two hands of the Greek, he held them between his own and spoke: 'Swear to me by the God thou worshippes that, even as I once gave thee thy life and madest thee my comrade and gavest thee a share of all, so dost thou deal truly with me in this matter as thou hast ever done!'

'Even as I have done by thee, so do I in this: I swear it by God!' replied the Greek.

The moon was already low in the west and it wanted little more than an hour to dawn, when an old woman, barefooted and closely shrouded in her long white yashmak, stole cautiously forth from a hovel of a little mud-built village which lies in the foothills above Selefkeh, and passed quickly down the garbage-littered street. No one was stirring; only here and there a great yellow dog, dozing in the hot faint air, raised his head and growled as the woman passed, or sent out a half-hearted yelp to be taken up languidly by half a score of his kind in other quarters of the village and die again into silence. Climbing the slope above the village she halted a moment and directed a furtive look back on the vista of flat mud roofs lying tier below tier on the hill. But the sleeping figures of the peasants curled up in the open under their quilts did not move, and she resumed the ascent, making apparently for a little fountain which shone white in the moonlight.

Simultaneously what had appeared to be a log lying in the shadow of a great boulder high up the hillside became endowed with motion, and after looking stealthily round, wormed itself

through the bushes to a point whence the fountain and village were visible. For a few minutes it looked steadily down the slope up which the white figure was painfully toiling, and then, rising to a crouching posture, glided rapidly from bush to bush and rock to rock down the hill. It was Osman. Presently he reached the top of the little cliff which overhung the fountain at which the woman was already seated expectant, and, pausing a moment, whistled softly. The white figure looked up, beckoned, and rising moved slowly towards a little cave some twenty yards away; Osman dropped down the cliff and followed rapidly, and coming up with her a yard or two from the cave's mouth, stretched out his hands as though he would have folded her in his embrace, but with a fearful look towards the village she eluded his grasp and passed quickly into the opening. Osman followed and, with a low cry of 'Mother!' clasped her to his breast, with gentle force drew her veil aside, and stood face to face with—Dimitri!

With an oath of astonishment he started back, and then, quick as lightning, sprang at the Greek; but the supple figure eluded his mighty arms, and, slipping aside, tripped him and brought him heavily to the ground. At the same instant dark figures sprang out of the recesses of the cave and precipitated themselves on the prostrate brigand. Yet he struggled to his feet and, dashing one of his assailants against the rock-wall, crushed his skull like an egg-shell; but a blow from the butt of a rifle felled him once more, bleeding and stunned, and when he came to himself he was lying gagged and bound in the moonlight outside the cave, while two or three zaptiehs were washing wounds received in the struggle at the fountain hard by.

'Well, my fine fellow,' said the binbashi, kicking the prostrate figure, 'thou hast been trapped for the last time.'

'Ay,' put in a fawning voice beside him, 'and have I not well earned the hundred medjidiés which his Excellency promised me by the beard of the Prophet even as he gave me fifty for trapping him five months ago? My lord will not forget to report how well I have kept my word once more.'

The officer turned upon his heel and regarded the cringing Greek with an aspect of unutterable contempt; then, turning to a private, he bade him bring a certain bag which he had entrusted to him. Dimitri's eyes followed the man's movements with eager interest, and as he drew from his tunic a chinking canvas pouch the wretch's face lit up with the light of greed.

‘Thus spake my most noble lord the pasha unto his servant,’ said the officer, taking the bag: “When, by the grace of Allah, thou hast the devil safe bound, then shalt thou pay to the giaour who has brought him to thee the hundred medjidiés which I promised by the beard of the Prophet (whom Allah bless!) that I would give him.” Here is thy money; count it.’

With a whine of pleasure the Greek grasped the pouch and, turning out the large silver coins in the moonlight, counted them slowly and lovingly, keeping ever a furtive eye on the zaptiehs standing at ease by the prostrate figure of Osman or sitting on the low rocks binding up their wounds and scratches. The binbashi showed signs of impatience, and Dimitri, hastily concluding his count, rose to his feet, salaamed low, and would have kissed the officer’s hand in token of gratitude, but the latter drew it back and spoke again:

‘Thus also said my most noble lord the pasha unto his servant: “This shalt thou pay to the giaour because for the second time he hath delivered his master into my hand, and because of the word I spake to him; but I know the blackness of his heart, and that but for him the robber had not escaped from my hands seven days ago; it was needful that I should promise that I might recapture the runaway, but when I shall have no further use for this carrion, let it not longer pollute the air of Allah. See thou to this.” Soldiers, seize him!’

Before the stupefied Greek could move more than a step the zaptiehs had pinioned the shrieking wretch hand and foot and bound him to the nearest pine-tree. Retiring ten paces the officer formed them in line: a few seconds’ silence, broken only by the groans of the traitor, and then the sharp ping of the Winchesters rang out in the dawn, and the miserable soul was sent to its account.

‘Take the money from him,’ said the officer, pointing to the still quivering corpse. ‘Forward!’

Four days later a gunboat which had been lying in the Selefkeh roads put out to sea, and on board was Osman Oglo. She returned before sunrise next morning, but no one saw or heard more of the brigand. Had he been transferred to some other prison?—had he fallen overboard? Who can say? Many accidents happen at sea, and the Sultan, who is the father of his people, will not sign the death-warrants of his children.

AMONG THE SARDES.

On the whole the ancients seem to have had no good opinion of Sardinia. It was a capital corn-field, but a very undesirable place of residence. There was no better province whither to promote an obnoxious Roman of rank. If he did not die of the fever, he might be disgraced for his inability to control the Barbaricini, or mountaineers of the Barbagia district.

Cicero, in particular, is very hard on the island. True, he congratulates his brother, Quintus Tullius, on being sent there. But it is a sardonic congratulation. 'You could not,' he says, 'be in a better place to be forgotten by your creditors.' At another time he warns him—'Take care of your health, for, although it is winter, remember that you are in Sardinia.' Elsewhere, in his legal capacity, as the opponent of Tigellius, the Sarde poet, whose advocate he was to have been—'I esteem it,' he says, 'an advantage that I am not pleading for a man more pestilential than his country.' Perhaps there was more of the bully than the judicial spirit in these and the like utterances; but such abuse, from so great a man, was sure to hit its mark.

In this paper I do not propose to enter the lists with Cicero, who probably never set foot in Sardinia, and spoke from hearsay only. But my notes may none the less tend to show that he was too severe. So few of the tourist race trouble Sardinia that they may also be acceptable for their information. Even in Italy the island is regarded, somewhat romantically, as a country where old marble palaces of the times of the Arragon rule may be bought for a song, and where it costs nothing to live. And the average Italian, who knows anything about it, imagines that it is a barbaric land where he will find no cafés with chairs set in the sun or the shade, and the like concessions to the dissolute tastes of civilisation.

Every evening a mail packet steams from Civita Vecchia into the red glow of the declining sun, and reaches Sardinia ten or twelve hours after she starts. This is the shortest route. It is also, I think, the most impressive; for one then lands with the mails in the Aranci Gulf at four or five o'clock in the morning, and the picture of the broken mountains, which grip the Gulf

like the curves of a forceps, rising phantasmally against a cloudy star-bespangled sky, stays in the memory. The dawn breaks before the train leaves for Cagliari, and allows one further to see the islets of ruddy granite in the pale purple water, and the long undulated tongues of land which bind the bay. Rocks and slopes alike are matted with a tangle of wild mint, thyme, lavender, cistus, and gorse, and the perfume of the air is ravishing. Two or three white houses with vermilion roofs, and the longer white body of the railway station, are all the signs of human life in this the northern terminus of Sardinia. But, ere we depart, a score of yellow-skinned natives gather from Heaven knows where, to see us off. As types of manhood they are not very imposing. The moist air may not be very good for the lungs, but it is odd to mark these sons and daughters of the soil shielding their mouths with cloaks and shawls, as if they were in peril of fire-damp.

This is one's first experience of the Sardes, and I do not know that subsequent closer acquaintance alters the idea it gives of them. As we run through the land towards the capital, we see more of them. The railway stations here, as in the American States, seem to be the trysting spots of the adjacent villages. A big slate is set conspicuously on every station wall, with the day of the week and the date chalked upon it. The people may therefore pretend that they muster by the train for their education. Anyhow, there they are; and as nearly each village in Sardinia boasts of a costume differing from that of its neighbouring village, we have a kaleidoscopic picture of colours and very old fashions in the course of our jaunt. From early times the Sarde women have had a name for the indelicacy of their dress. Dante ('Purg.' xxiii. 94) taunts the ladies of Florence in his day with being even less decent than certain of their Sarde sisters. Unless they are at work in the fields, the latter wear their skirts long enough. But stays they abhor; and it is the meagre white linen covering they draw, or do not draw, over their shapely bosoms that has gained them this censure. But what a Sarde woman neglects in one particular, she atones for in another. Her festa bodice, for example, would dazzle British eyes. It is of satin, any colour you please, and heavily brodered with gold and silver lace. The thing is of course valuable. It may have been her grandmother's, or her grandmother's grandmother's; and, God willing, it will survive to be the pride of her granddaughter's granddaughter's soul. On festa days she wears other inherited treasure in the

shape of filigree gold trinkets, earrings, necklets of triple fold, armlets, and brooches. A rich farmer lady of Sardinia is then a sight to see, and, discreetly, to laugh at. Her fortune is veritably all upon her person. And the jingle of her precious metals, as she struts cumbrously under a large green sunshade, ever and again glancing to see that she has dropped none of her ornaments, is enough to turn a Jew crazy with avaricious desire. Festa days occur daily in this or that part of the island, for the local calendar is notably rich in martyrs during the Diocletian persecution, and so one sees many of these bullion-clad dames at the railway stations. The men, too, are picturesque, with their guns and sheepskin jackets (the *mastruca*), but they are not to be compared with the women. What is a black Phrygian cap to a head-gear of scarlet silk pocket-handkerchiefs! and how trivial is a white cotton skirt, short, and belted at the waist (the common apparel of a man), by the side of the ample gown of a large dame, covered in front by an expansive silk apron in a design of green and blue flowers!

The scenery of Sardinia, or rather such of it as the mere railway traveller sees, is less spectacular than the people. The island, as a whole, is very mountainous, but nature has left a series of broad long flats from north to south, linked to each other by gentle rises and depressions. These have of course attracted the engineers who were summoned to set a railway in the land. Thus we are eternally between mountains, and nearly always on the level. Many of the mountains are volcanic, and old lava streams are to be distinguished between their shorn cones and rounded humps and the valleys. Here and there we steam across spacious areas of nothing in the world but gum cistus bushes, blooming their very best. It is as if a snow-storm had come upon the land, and each flake had stayed unmelted where it had fallen. Then there are oak woods, interspersed with cork trees reft of their bark; and under the oaks myriads of asphodels lift their pale, stately heads.

All this is, however, the exception. The eye gets accustomed to level meadows, broken by purling brooks with ferny banks, from which the yellow oxen give us lazy stares of greeting. A few shaggy shepherds, mounted, and with guns slung to their shoulders, also grin at us from these watering-places. Otherwise there is not much to keep one in mind that this is Sardinia.

Not much; but something. For, whether we are in the woods,

or going dryshod through a swamp, or groaning up to a new watershed, every now and then we pass a building like a Martello tower, or a windmill shorn of its sails. These are the famous Noraghe, about which so much has been written. To this day the world cannot determine whether they were temples or guard-houses, or an ancient form of cottage, or sepulchres, or altars of sacrifice. They are of massive construction, so that the modern Sardes in search of convenient building material cannot do more than lift the upper stones from them. This explains their ruined state whenever they are near a village. But there are many hundreds of them in the wilds, on remote plateaux and elsewhere, far from habitations, and thus guarded from the spoilers. Some are half hid among the woods, and overgrown by ivy and scrub. Others stand nakedly on the spurs of the mountains, whence they are landmarks for a score of miles. Others, again, are set in the plains, with commonplace surroundings of meadowland and grain-fields. The latter-day Sardes accept them as an essential feature of their country; they do not even puzzle their wits about them. Formerly incantations and midnight spells were worked within and around them; they were ransacked for treasure; or they served as convenient haunts for the bandits who swarmed in the land. But now they are nothing but so many ruined towers, whispering of Carthage and Tyre, who had a hand in their building; of the Saracens, who wrecked multitudes of them; and of the various Popes of Rome, who for centuries preached in vain against the Sarde idolaters that probably worshipped within them. The Sardes of the nineteenth century offer no explanation of them. If you question them on the subject, they shrug their shoulders, that is all.

Cagliari, the capital of Sardinia, is a sufficiently interesting city of the hot southern type, fringed with prickly pear, and having gardens of orange trees set about with palms. It is very old, of course. Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Saracens, Spaniards, and Italians have all had a hand in its creation or mutilation. One may here stumble over ruins, and muse in an amphitheatre, to one's heart's content. There is a whole suburb of ancient sepulchres, hewn in the rock, most of which have been turned into donkey-sheds or cow-houses. To guard themselves from the flies, these quadrupeds thrust their noses into the niches that once held honoured dust. Only one of these sepulchres is protected. This is called 'the Viper's Grotto,' because of the two vipers

chiselled on its elaborate pediment. The inscriptions hereon unfold a pathetic tale. One Philip, a Roman, his wife Pomptilla, and their family were here interred. Pomptilla seems to have given her life for her husband's, and the different verses commemorating the sacrifice suggest that the poets of Sardinia were here summoned to a competitive examination on the subject—for their common immortalisation. From the tomb one looks down at the *stagni*, the blue bay of Cagliari, and the distant mountains of the south-west corner of Sardinia.

These *stagni* are a pleasant or unpleasant feature of Sardinia, according to the season. In winter and spring they are bright and innocent enough. Cagliari is flanked by their broad glistening expanses, one of them being not less than thirty miles in circumference. For most of the year, scores of thousands of flamingoes may here be seen standing knee-deep in the water. Late in the spring, however, they withdraw to Africa to breed. The Sardes call them by a name meaning 'the red people.' Of old they were esteemed good to eat, though modern experimentalists say they are tough. But in summer the *stagni* lose this element of colour. They also lose a good deal of their water, and much fever is the result. At such a time they are to be avoided, save by the hardy native fisher who plunges to the neck into their tepid depths, in quest of the cockles which abound in them.

The Pope Pius V. in his day described Cagliari as 'Hortus celestium plantationum.' I believe the phrase was due to the discovery of an infinite quantity of bones under the cathedral, which bones were, without impartial inquiry, assumed to be the relics of some of Sardinia's many saints. From his Holiness's point of view, Cagliari may be what he calls it, but to the ordinary person of unsublimed intelligence and weak legs it is only a white town built at the base of a rock, and rising with the rock itself to the absurd height of about four hundred feet above the sea. The narrow streets all pivot from the summit of this terrible hill. They are, moreover, cobbled, so that the toil of climbing them is piquantly alloyed with a little pain. And they are used by the occupiers of the tall houses on either side as drying-grounds for the clothes from the washtub; so that, though the town is enlivened by the perennial supply of crimson petticoats and blue bodices which hang thus between heaven and earth, the pedestrian is bedewed by a rain that is not wholly celestial.

But in spite of these drawbacks Cagliari is an agreeable place,

especially for those who live on the top of the hill and are under no obligation ever to descend it. It has old towers and old churches, and from its eyrie one may see Bruncu Spina, the highest mountain of the island, some seventy miles distant, on the one side, and nearly to Africa, across the sea, on the other side. Of its ancient towers, the one called the Elephant appeals most strongly to the imagination. It gets its name from the carven elephant over the mouldering portcullis of its entrance, and it was erected, as its inscription tells us, in the year 1307, when the Pisans held Cagliari. The builder of the pile, 'Magister Capula Joannes,' has for six centuries advertised himself as a man 'never yet found remissful in his undertakings.' It is a pity he has not lived long enough to profit by the reputation his tower would certainly ere this have procured for him. It was here that, in 1671, they suspended in an iron cage the heads of a number of men who had conspired together and assassinated the viceroy, a person obnoxious to them. For sixteen years these heads were allowed to grin changefully at the passers-by. Only in 1688 did the King of Spain permit the friends of the victims to bury the skulls out of sight.

I did not stay long in Cagliari. The wooded crests of the mountains on the landward side of the city were far more attractive than houses and castles of stone. One looks at them across the broad sunny plains of the Campidano—a semi-circuit of land and *stagni*, all as flat as a pancake. The Campidano is noted for its wines, its fruits, and its fevers, and for the extravagant richness of the costumes of its ladies. There are millions of olive trees scattered about its hot surface. Indeed, nowadays, Sardinia is likely to draw most of her importance from the olive. Of old it was not so. The natives were too indolent to graft the wild olives which grew in the forests. But a decree of Victor Emmanuel, in 1806, conferring a patent of nobility on every landowner in the country who planted a certain number of trees, and raising to the dignity of Count the man who planted twenty thousand, had its natural result. These 'olive lords,' as they were called, were not much esteemed half a century ago. By this time, however, their descendants have forgotten the source of their nobility.

One may get well among the mountains of Barbagia by a little narrow-gauge railway from Cagliari. But there is so much bone-shaking to be endured on this ill-made track (hardened sailors are

made sea-sick by it) that I preferred to rely upon the diligence for the first stage of the journey. We started early one morning from an ancient inn of the kind described in 'Don Quixote,' and which was doubtless contemporary with Cervantes. Its two-storied premises formed the four sides of a square; the lower story being devoted to the horses of the travellers, while each traveller occupied the room immediately over his horse. This diligence was a terrible old vehicle, but the horses were good, and so, after eleven hours, I was turned adrift in S. Vito, a Sarde village of the more primitive kind, and the end of the stage.

The country we had traversed was wild rather than beautiful. We passed through but one village during the fifty miles, that of Quartu, distant four Roman miles from Cagliari. Its houses, like those of other villages in the Campidano, are built of large sun-dried bricks of mud and chopped straw. The bricks are deluged with water while the mason puts them one upon another, and this suffices instead of mortar. As a rule, the houses are strong, but the building material is not always a success. Occasionally a very heavy storm of rain saturates the walls, so that they collapse like a soaked sugar-loaf. An entire village full of wretched inhabitants have thus on a sudden found themselves involved in a woful domestic bog.

From Quartu we ascended into the mountains of Burcei, one of the least frequented parts of the island. Here the rocks are still shaggy with oaks and cork trees, interlaced with wild vines. They are broken eccentrically into white and ruddy pinnacles and scars of granite, clothed with brushwood, and so precipitous that even the charcoal burner cannot get at them for his unholy work of denudation. Wild boar, deer, and the shy moufflon make these peaks their home.

S. Vito is fairly distant from civilised influences, but not quite sufficiently so. To be sure, the speech is Sarde, not Italian, and the costumes are lively. Here, too, I saw the Sarde dance, or *ballo tondo*—as demure an exhibition of gaiety as I ever beheld. It was on Whitsunday. Men and maids in their finest bravery mustered in the square before the rickety, worm-eaten old church. The elders squatted on the ground by the church door and elsewhere, looking as if they regretted the past days of their youth. A brace of rather tipsy pipers blew at their bagpipes (for Sardinia has these in common with the Highlanders, though they are of ruder workmanship). The dancers took hands and formed one

wide circle, and then, to the unearthly music, the circle moved slowly round and round. The footing was of the most trivial kind, and no one smiled. But for the colour of the silks and satins and the jewellery of the ladies, their hearty bronzed cheeks and their black eyes, it would have been a very depressing spectacle. Nightly, too, the streets of the village echoed until past the witching hour with the dolorous chants of native troubadours. They tinkled accompaniments on mandolines or concertinas. It is curious that the islanders of the Levant all delight in airs of the most distressful kind. One and all, these islands have suffered sad vicissitudes: is it that the spirit of their history seeks thus to perpetuate itself? Who shall say? Off the western coast of Sardinia is a little unpeopled islet, inelegantly called 'Stomach-ache Island.' For my part, I believe it owes its name to some stranger who hurriedly fled thither from the main island, preferring the society of the waves and the gulls to the concert with which the Sardes thought, hospitably, to entertain him; and who christened his haven after the manner of his feelings. Be that as it may, the Sarde melodies are of an unhappy cast. But, as I have said, S. Vito is in daily connection with Cagliari, and therefore, in spite of its *ballo tondo* and native strains, likely to have its primeval quaintnesses somewhat tarnished.

Accordingly, one day I took horse and guide, and rode away into the heart of the Barbagia mountains, by the valley of the Flumendosa. For hours we saw nothing of mankind. The hills fell around us in startling cliffs, or in long slopes studded with great trees upon the greensward. We could count the trout in the river by our side by hundreds. Hawks were in the air over our heads, and eagles above the brows of the boldest of the mountains. We lunched under the shade of a spreading fig tree, wild by the water-side; and oleanders in full flower grew ten and twelve feet high farther along the banks. While we dozed and smoked thus during the noontide heat, a pair of ancients joined us by the cool brook which here flowed into the river. They wore sheepskins, and their greasy black hair fell low on their backs. Their faces were corrugated with wrinkles, and in their eyes was an expression of plaintive hardness, the outcome of their gentle pastoral life. This honest couple of Sarde Strephons set down their guns, and lay along the grass with us for an hour or two.

When we were well rested we remounted our horses, and climbed a mountain by a prodigiously steep trail. My guide, who

was a tough old septuagenarian and a retired brigand, when he discovered that I had a taste for out-of-the-way places and unhackneyed things, said he would take me to a friend in the village of Armungia: and this was our way thither.

Armungia is built bleakly on the crest of the mountain, whence it looks across a ravine at the village of Villa Salto on another mountain. A great noraghe stands up in its midst, and this the villagers, who are delightfully barbaric, use as a cow-house. Nevertheless, I climbed to the top of it and looked about me. The native houses are dull hovels enough—all of one story; offering their backs to the public thoroughfare, the front entrance being through a stoutly-walled courtyard, where the pigs and poultry play with each other. This architectural feature is universal in the outlying districts of Sardinia. It reminds one of the times when Pisans and Genoese, or Arragonese and the native rulers of Arborea (the westernmost of the four provinces into which the land was divided as independent principalities), were eternally skirmishing over the country, possessing it one after the other, and giving the hapless sons of the soil no tenure of security. Among these poor huts were two or three tall houses, painted pink and blue. Here lived the syndic in his official and private capacity, and the schoolmaster—both of whom were fetched in haste to see the stranger.

We sat for an hour in my guide's friend's house to receive visitors; and I was glad thus to make my first acquaintance with a genuine Sarde interior. The wall of the long reception-room was snowy white, it being an article of domestic faith to keep it so by constant washing; and the interstices of the juniper beams which composed the roof were closely filled with long reeds, blackened by smoke. A number of spits for the roasting of lambs, larks, or wild boar hung against the wall. On a ledge was a row of water jars, no way differing in design from those used by the Carthaginians of Carthage. Some cheeses lay on a wooden shelf cannily slung over the hearth-stone. Five or six circular straw sieves, tufted with bits of red and yellow cloth, were also suspended on the walls. These were for the sifting of the flour ground by the donkey in the corner, and are a popular and useful wedding present in Sardinia.

Save the above articles, the room was empty of movables—always, however, further excepting the donkey and its machine. Nothing takes the fancy in Sardinia more than the omnipresent

pot-bellied little ass which, with a hood over its eyes to protect it from giddiness, goes round and round, crushing the grain between the two mill-stones, to which it is attached by a rotating beam of wood. The patience and diminutiveness of the creature are alike remarkable. As there is an ass, or 'miller' ('*molenti*,' the miller, is its native appellation), to every house, it is the custom to appoint a man to look after all the millers of the community during their hours of relaxation. At a certain time in the day, therefore, one may see the little donkeys capering out of the houses, with many a bray of satisfaction and greeting to each other, all frolicking in a troop towards the pasture-ground of the commune. During playtime they are as full of spirit and antics as they are methodically industrious when harnessed to the mill. In the morning, however, the ass-herd reappears among them to recall them to their toil. Sometimes he pipes them homewards, and they trot along, kicking playfully at each other as if they liked the music. But, when the village is reached, each little ass in a sobered manner steps over the threshold of its master's house, and, with its tail between its legs and drooping ears, listlessly submits to its fate, like a schoolboy about to be catechised by a dame.

But to recur to my entertainer in Armungia. He was a tall, sinewy gentleman of the pastoral order, wearing, among other interesting garments, a deerskin vest embroidered with variegated silk. A demijohn of wine, crushed from his own vineyard, was in a twinkling brought and set on the ground of the floor between our legs. The syndic and the schoolmaster gladly consented to help us in drinking it. Neither of these gentlemen could, for the life of him, understand why a stranger, of his own free will, should come among them. 'You have the whole world to choose from, and you come to Sardinia!' However, they could not but take it as a compliment, and so we became very friendly over the wine, which was excellent, though worth only a penny a pint to the grower. When we parted, the syndic, who was an old man, with the mirth of fifty clowns in his large down-trending nose and his expansive mouth, said to me, as he held my hand between his two brown palms, 'On your return, my friend, to Sardinia and Armungia, I beg you to seek me in the churchyard, and there scatter a few flowers on my grave.' They told me afterwards that the old man was in his dotage. At any rate, it was a tragi-comic dotage; and I think with pathos of his whimsical red face and his farewell injunctions, to which I promised to give heed.

Before we scrambled down the mountain to our quarters for the night in the russet-roofed village of Ballao, it was needful to enter sundry other houses and drink more wine. My ex-brigand had a wide circle of friends, some of them queer fishes, and so there was much hob-a-nobbing round the fires of olive-twigs heaped in the middle of the rooms. The Sardes are, indeed, unconscionable tipplers. They go nowhere without a gourd of wine braced to their shoulders. Strangers who meet in the byways stop and drink to each other. Even the young girls who gave us 'good-day' in the course of our travels were eager to stand awhile, take a pull or two, and discuss the quality of the vintage. The quantity of wine my ex-brigand could consume in a day was astounding; and he never impugned the cellar of our host in the evening by retiring sober to bed.

In some sort, wine in Sardinia is a substitute for doctors. Wisely or not, the people pin their faith to it as a cure for divers ills. For the fever there is nothing to match it. The sound sleep that follows a quart of Vernaccia is said to be invaluable as a regulator of the system. It is also reputed an excellent palliative for the torture of the fleas which teem in certain districts.

Not, however, that doctors are lacking in the island. Every commune has one. He is paid a salary by the commune, and the people are entitled to be doctored without other charge than their proportion of the general communal taxes. This plan does not work satisfactorily. One can hardly expect the ordinary medical man in such circumstances to be enthusiastic about his patients. As for the people, they accept the doctor as they accept the tax-gatherer. They have no great esteem for him or his skill. A witch, if they could lay hands upon one in these sad days of enlightenment, were much more to their taste. Some of the old witches' remedies are still extant. Not so very long ago a sun-stroke was cured by plucking and disembowelling a live fowl, which was then fitted upon the sufferer's head, to be worn as a skull-cap until it rotted away. Again, as healers the saints are much more popular than the doctors. The sick, and even sick cows and asses, are introduced in the wake of a religious procession. They hobble after the stout priests, the banners and the music, strengthened by faith. If the unwonted exertion does the patient good, the saints' intervention is at once acknowledged by the grateful man with a waxen or silver cast of his limb or the other part that was affected, and the effigy is strung up in the

church. A woman, in such a case, does not mind offering to the altar, for public exhibition, a waxen model of her breasts. And, worse still, coarse representations of ulcers and abscesses are to be seen dangling among the commoner votive offerings. One little church, near Cagliari, with better judgment, wears from the gallery in its western division a fringe of ostrich eggs, the donation of a sailor after a prosperous voyage. Under competition of this kind, one cannot wonder that the mass of the people trouble their doctor as little as possible. He is, perhaps, called in to a death-bed, when, as a matter of form, he applies the mustard plaster, which, I am told, is his remedy for most complaints. But neither the victim nor his tearful relations expect that good will come of it. Some time back it was customary in Sardinia to take the pillow from under a dying man's head, and to replace it by a stone. This was supposed to facilitate death. I fancy the doctor in these days plays the part of the stone.

Our accommodation for the night in Ballao was so typical of what we met with in other places that a few words about it may be welcome. We arrived at dusk, and stumbled up the uneven streets of the village, attended by a motley following that increased every moment. 'Oh, you must not mind,' observed my guide, when I growled at this conspicuousness. 'It is a mark of respect for us,' and he held his grizzled old head high as he spoke.

I do not think the farmer's wife whom we requisitioned for a lodging was very happy to see us.

The ex-brigand claimed to know her husband, but he was away. However, with the self-possession of a man of the world, my friend took matters into his own hands; bade the lady get together what edible luxuries she could for the evening repast, and give us a good bed. He deftly made her understand that she ought to be proud to receive a distinguished traveller; for, distinguished the man who underwent fatigues for no definite object could not be.

One mortally annoying peculiarity of Sardinia is the heartless way in which you are left to hunger until the fashionable feasting hour arrives. Though you reach your host's house at two o'clock in the afternoon, there will be nothing for you to eat until nine or ten. Certainly, the wine will flow; but not everyone can find comfort in wine. Here at Ballao, for instance, I spent several famishing hours amid my hostess's various babies. They, the cats, the pigs, and the poultry all found amusement about the floor of

the room ; and the 'molenti' in the corner contributed the music of the mill to the other hubbub. Now and then a villager would look in, and, having said in a breath, 'How do you do ? There's nothing much the matter with me,' would run off. My guide did all he could to get the priest of the parish to call, but his reverence, with excuses, sent the key of the church instead. However, at length the room was cleared ; the children all put into one big bed ; the donkey turned loose ; and supper announced. We sat four to table ; my hostess and the eldest of her pretty dark-eyed daughters joining us. It was a pity the husband was from home ; for in the south the softer sex are not expected to add enlivenment to hospitality ; and I fear we were a nuisance to the good souls. We had soup of sour milk, macaroni, lamb-chops moistened with lemon-juice, cold trout, and cheese ; and no sooner was the meal ended than the lady arose with a bow, offered me the rushlight which had illuminated our feast, and wished us 'Good repose.' But good repose, for me at least, was out of the question. In the first place I had to share my bed with the ex-brigand, who stepped between the sheets unwashed, and divested of nothing but his boots ; and, in the second place, our worthy hostess, to show her appreciation of our visit, had collected all the clocks of the house, and, I believe, borrowed those of her neighbours, and hung them upon the chamber walls, whence they ticked loudly against each other, as if for a wager. Among these clocks, and near my head, was one inhabited by a cuckoo, which every quarter came out with a brief song, and hourly sung for a minute or so. Add to this the scurrying of rats and mice, the efforts of the cats outside to get at these happy rodents, and the mysterious noises of certain hens, whose presence was subsequently declared by their eggs in the four corners of the room, and if you are fastidious you may understand that it was joy to see the dawn. Then, after a wash and a raw egg, I was allowed to give a florin to the maid (who kissed my hand in return for it), order the horses, and so, with smiles and good wishes from the lady, ride away into the cheerful outer air.

The next night, at the village of Nurri, on a plateau about fifteen hundred feet above the sea, was a curious contrast to this. Here our society was mainly masculine. The good man of the house was glad to the core to have us under his roof. He invited his neighbours to come and envy him his good fortune ; and they came, and drank, and grew so noisy that the blackened old beams

of the room resounded with their shouts. The women, on this occasion, sat aside by themselves, ever and anon glancing at each other, when something rather too coarse for their ears was spoken. But it was a memorable scene, for the men were in their festa clothes, and the gold buttons in their well-starched shirt-fronts gave them a touch of distinction; and the fire flames from the hearth, where a lamb was roasting while we ate our soup, lit up the crimson and blue headgear of the women, and their strong, swart countenances. Here the evening was rather protracted. I cannot tell how much wine we drank. But I recall the passive reproach in the faces of the women during our bacchanalian indulgence, the heavy way in which at length they rose and gave their arms to their respective masters, and the tumult of reiterated 'good-nights' which closed the scene. This night I slept by myself, among the wine barrels of the good man's store, having surprised my ex-brigand by informing him that in England I usually so slept, and that I would rather not repeat the experience of Ballao. That he might not fail in one tittle of his duties as host, our friend of Nurri, in the morning, strode a good mile or two with us on our way, and at parting filled our pockets with broad beans ('some fruit' he called it), gathered with the dew on them from his suburban garden.

From Nurri we laboured into Barbagia, up mountains and down mountains the livelong day. I wish I could adequately describe the landscape beauties that were around us. I fear, however, that with most men the passion of scenery is but fleeting. They are not deeply enamoured of anything that does not throb with the pulse of human life. One hour we were on the herby ridge of a calcareous giant that the hour before had seemed to tower sky high above us, and an hour later we had plunged to the foot of it on the other side by a trail that made the heart palpitate.

Barbagia may in part be compared to a number of rough concentric plateaux of which the mountain mass of Gennargentu is the culmination. The plateaux are not merely naked levels. Thick woods of virgin oak and cork trees cover them largely, and dolomitic rocks of startling outline (called locally *tacchi*) spring from them like enormous turrets. Tremendous ravines separate the plateaux. In one part of the Flumendosa valley the cliffs are some six hundred feet vertical for miles. The rushing streams in the gullies are so many moats to these natural fastnesses. Thus,

the red-roofed villages which perch in nooks on the mountain sides, though they may be well within gunshot of each other, are much more than a Sabbath day's journey apart.

It is due to the conformation of the country that the Barbaricini held their independence for centuries after the rest of Sardinia. The Romans could not do much with them. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when Pisa and Genoa divided between them nearly all the rest of the island, the mountaineers were still untamed. And even in the eighteenth century, when Sardinia passed from Spain to Savoy, they were so monstrously old-fashioned in their methods of life that troops had to be sent against them again and again, and the fathers of families nailed by scores to the village scaffolds, to impress upon them that cattle-lifting and other thieving and indiscriminate brigandry were no longer a mode of livelihood to be tolerated. Here, too, Paganism lingered long after the rest of the island was Christianised. Most of the hideous little images known to the museums as 'Sarde' idols hail from these mountains. The exhortations of the Popes of Rome to the bishops of Sardinia to eradicate the Pagan habits of the Barbaricini were for long as vain as the efforts of nations to subjugate them.

But though the mountains of Barbagia are rude and bleak like mountains elsewhere, the pent valleys are thoroughly charming. The rare meadows by the Flumendosa in its upper course are an untrained flower-bed. Our horses trod to the knee among pale dandelions, gentian, convolvuli, and poppies. From the wild olives and the pear and fig trees, which offer their fruit to the passer-by, nightingales sang to each other, and filled the hot air with their intensity. Of other birds I think we saw most goldfinches. Falcons and hawks, however, were always to be seen sailing aloft; and wherever a bleating of lambs was audible, they and the red-beaked crow were especially active. One day a fox tailed before us for several minutes, with a lazy disregard for us that ought to have been profoundly irritating. These valleys, beautiful as they are, do not attract residents. They are notably malarious in the bad season. It is only now and then that the villagers from far and near troop into them to celebrate a festa by this or that dilapidated old hermitage among the flowers. For a few days the rocks echo with their babble, and birds of prey are drawn thither by the scent of the roast meats. Men and women sleep side by side on the grass, or in the bed-chambers they

improvise with the stones and boughs around them. The priest says mass in the mouldy, rotting little church. There is a flutter of banners inside the building, and the children are marched to and fro in fancy dresses, with symbolical lilies in their hands. But on the third or fourth day begins the exodus. The hermitage is locked until the next anniversary. Full of wine, good cheer, and spiritual joy, the villagers climb back to their nests; the priest returns to his cure; and when the hawks and the crows have spent another busy day or two among the relics of the feast, the valley has only a number of bones, bean-skins, and peascods to remind it of the late interlude in its life of monotonous solitude.

I suppose our chief feat during this tour in the mountains was the ascent of Bruncu Spina, the highest spot in Sardinia. But really it was no feat at all; for as day by day we lessened the distance that separated us from it, we also lessened its actual height above our heads. Finally, one morning we rode to the very summit of it (6,266 feet) from the village of Aritzo, itself 2,680 feet above the sea; and, having viewed, as it seemed to us, the whole of the great island, burnished by the sun, though we were under a dark bank of cloud, we rode down again, contented.

Brigand-lovers will, I am afraid, be sorry to know that their heroes have had their day in Sardinia. Though I gave these gentlemen every chance, I left the mountains unscathed. Not that the bandit instinct is quite dead in the land. My guide was dumb when I probed him for facts. He merely smiled and shook his head with the air of one who knew a thing or two of which the world knew nothing. But others were less reticent. 'Banditti? Yes, sir; and within whispering distance of your honour,' was the reply of a fierce-eyed magnate of a mountain village, when I questioned him on this fascinating subject. He hastened to add that I need have no fear: 'You are perfectly safe, perfectly.' I hope I do this candid gentleman no wrong in attributing my safety rather to his discretion than his generosity. In the face of good roads and the omnipresent gendarmerie, he had found brigandage to be no longer a lucrative business. Instead of a brigand, therefore, he was an honourable servant of the State, and he confided the subordinate branches of his labour to men with a reputation akin to his own. Thus civilisation does its work.

But in truth Sardinia can dispense with robber-romances. There is enough various romance in her history; in the old customs and garbs of her villages; in her rocks, rivers, and valleys.

SOME UNREHEARSED EFFECTS.

READERS of dramatic history are familiar with the well-worn subject of theatrical riots. The O.P. riots, the 'Bottle conspiracy' disturbance in the Dublin Theatre, the Macready riots at New York, with many other similar outbreaks, have often been described. But an Elizabethan forerunner of these disturbances may not be so well known. About the end of October, 1602, the London playgoers were informed by bills, circulated by a rascal named Venner, that on a certain Saturday evening there would be performed, at a theatre 'on the Banckeside,' a play 'to be acted only by certain gentlemen and gentlewomen of account.' As at that time women never acted in public, the female parts in plays being taken by boys and men, such an announcement brought crowds to the theatre. The charge was eighteenpence or two shillings, and Venner, when most of the money was taken, decamped with the spoil. He endeavoured to escape by water, but was soon overtaken and secured. In the meantime the victims of the hoax, as soon as they saw how they had been gulled, wrecked the theatre. John Chamberlain, writing to Dudley Carleton, in one of a number of letters since published by the Camden Society, says that they 'revenged themselves upon the hangings, curtains, stooles, walles, and whatsoever came in their way, very outrageously, and made great spoile.' Somewhat akin to this Venner was the conjuror who advertised that he would jump into a quart bottle at the Haymarket Theatre on January 16, 1749. The theatre was crammed with spectators, while great crowds, unable to gain admittance, thronged the street. The conjuror, however, did not appear, but got clear away with the receipts, and his dupes took their revenge in the usual way, by a violent attack upon the theatre.

A genuine attempt to bring female actors on the stage was made a few years after Venner's escapade at the theatre in Blackfriars. Towards the end of 1629 a company of French players, of both sexes, tried to act at this house a comedy in French, but the attempt was a dismal failure, for, as a contemporary writer tersely puts it, the unlucky comedians were 'hissed, hooted, and pippen-pelted from the stage.' They bravely made a second and a third attempt to gain a hearing, but on each occasion were received in

the same way and driven off the boards. The discourtesy and rudeness shown by the audience were probably due as much or more to the fact of the company being French as to the presence of women actors. A few more years brought the absurd old practice of employing boys in female parts to an end. The first English actress appeared in 1661 in the character of Desdemona. In the prologue to 'Othello,' written by an obscure poet for this occasion, it is said that young female characters were often taken by men of from forty to fifty years of age—

With brows so large, and nerves so uncompliant,
When you call *Desdemona*—enter *Giant*.

During the Commonwealth the players led a hard and uncertain life. Public theatrical representations were prohibited, and the actors scattered. Some of them were able to act privately in noblemen's houses, while others tried to play to audiences gathered secretly, in defiance of the authorities. The latter performances, however, were continually disturbed, and 'unrehearsed effects' must have been of very frequent occurrence, as the actors were often seized by the soldiers, who stripped and fined them at their own sweet will. Some acting was done more openly, but mixed up with rope-dancing and other amusements by way of disguise. In these performances the chief actor was a certain Robert Cox. Kirkman, the bookseller and collector of the 'Drolleries' performed under these conditions, writes in very high praise of this actor's powers. He says that on one occasion at a fair in a country town, the part of a smith had been so well acted by Cox that the master-smith of the place came to him and said, 'Well, although your father speaks so ill of you, yet, when the fair is done, if you will come and work with me, I will give you twelve pence a week more than I give any other journeyman.'

The Restoration brought back prosperity to the drama, and the players once more basked in the sunshine of the royal favour. Pepys records one or two amusing disturbances on the stage at this time. One afternoon a boy had to sing a song, and 'not singing it right, his master fell about his eares and beat him so, that it put the whole house in an uprore.' At another time the diarist was mightily pleased 'to see the natural affection of a poor woman, the mother of one of the children brought on the stage; the child crying, she by force got upon the stage, and took up her child, and carried it away off of the stage.' In one of the earliest of his dramatic notes Mr. Pepys mentions going to see 'The Moore of Venice' at the Cockpit. 'Burt,' he says,

'acted the Moore; by the same token, a very pretty lady that sat by me called out to see Desdemona smothered.' The force and realistic nature of theatrical performances have often evoked amusing interruptions from the more emotional of the spectators, while in a few other cases the sympathetic feeling created in a member of the audience has been so strong as actually to lead to fatal results. In 1739, when Havard's play of 'Charles I.' was being given at York, a young lady was so overcome one evening by the painful emotions excited by the piece that she fainted and died. This was tragedy indeed. It is somewhat curious to find that Churchill, describing in the 'Rosciad' the author of this tragically effective play, thus ridicules his pretensions as an actor :

Here Havard, all serene, in the same strains,
Loves, hates, and rages, triumphs, and complains;
His easy vacant face proclaim'd a heart
Which could not feel emotions, nor impart.

The 'Gentleman's Magazine' of 1782 records another fatal instance of excess of emotion. In this case tragedy resulted from comedy. A Northamptonshire lady, a Mrs. Fitzherbert, went one Wednesday evening to Drury Lane Theatre to see the 'Beggars Opera,' a revival of which amusing play was then delighting the town. As soon as Banister, the comedian, appeared upon the stage, 'made up' as Polly, the audience laughed loudly at his absurd appearance. Mrs. Fitzherbert was greatly affected and laughed immoderately. She found herself unable to control her emotion, and left the theatre before the end of the second act, but soon after fell into hysterics, in which she continued until Friday morning, when she died.

Some time ago, a sensational piece called 'A Mother's Sin' was being performed at the Queen's Theatre, Manchester. One night, towards the close of the third act, where the villain appears triumphant, and the hero seems to be hopelessly in his power, a man in the gallery rose excitedly, shaking his fist at the actor who was playing the villain, and then jumped from the gallery on to the stage, on which he fell heavily just clear of the footlights. The distance jumped was about thirty feet. The unfortunate man was taken to the infirmary, where it was found that in addition to other injuries his leg was broken. It was afterwards discovered that his name was the same as that of the heroine of the piece, and hence it was supposed his excitement.

Happily such cases as these are rare. But instances in which a spectator has been so carried away by the feelings aroused and

the interest excited by the play, as to loudly interrupt the performance with comic effect, are far from uncommon. The story of the medical student who shouted to the actors to support poor Juliet after she had taken the apparently fatal draught, while he would run for his stomach-pump, is well known. Not long since, during the performance of Mr. Robert Buchanan's play of 'Sophia' one night at Oldham, a very unexpected interruption occurred. In the course of the dialogue Tom Jones had said to Sophia Western, 'I have nothing left to offer you—not even the hope of better days to come!' It happened that the landlady of this particular Tom Jones was among the audience, and the good woman was so carried away by the apparent reality of the scene, and by the paths of her lodger, that loudly and shrilly she cried, 'Never heed, lad! Thee has gotten a real good sooper waiting at home: thee bring t' wench wi' thee!' The effect may be imagined. There is a story told of a company of 'barn stormers,' who once upon a time were playing 'Richard III.' in a stable-yard. Towards the end of the play the wicked king rushed in as usual, shouting 'A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!' An impressionable stable-boy immediately ran and brought a horse from a neighbouring stall, and dragged him kicking and backing to the astonished king. 'There's a horse for you,' cried the boy, while his majesty, bewildered by the too successful result of his frenzied appeal, shouted, 'Take him away—I couldn't get on him, I don't know what to do with him.' The audience probably thought this part of the play and mighty fine acting, and doubtless applauded enthusiastically.

In 1746 Garrick, and his would-be rival, Quin, were playing together at Drury Lane in Rowe's play of 'The Fair Penitent.' Garrick was the 'haughty, gallant, gay Lothario,' a libertine who, says Dr. Johnson, 'with gaiety which cannot be hated, and bravery which cannot be despised, retains too much of the spectator's kindness.' When Garrick as Lothario, gave Quin as Horatio the challenge, Quin, instead of accepting it with alacrity and boldness, very slowly drawled out the reply, 'I'll meet thee there!' He was so slow, and made so long a pause before he spoke, that once, it is said, an inhabitant of the gallery called out, 'Why don't you tell the gentleman whether you will meet him or not?' This anecdote illustrates and confirms the description of Quin as given by Churchill. The satirist sums him up in two lines:

Heavy and phlegmatic he trod the stage,
Too proud for Tenderness, too dull for Rage.

King George II. was one night at Drury Lane an applauding spectator of Fielding's farce of 'The Intriguing Chambermaid,' until in the course of the dialogue there came a speech in which a young girl says to her elderly suitor, 'You are villainously old; you are sixty, and cannot think of living much longer.' When the king, who was then nearly seventy, heard this, he jumped up angrily and exclaimed 'What damn stuff is this!'

It has happened not unfrequently to players themselves to be so possessed by the passions and emotions natural to their assumed characters, that their actions have led to startling and sometimes fatal results either to themselves or to their fellow performers. It is related of Goethe, that on one occasion during his managership of the Weimar Theatre, at a rehearsal of 'King John,' he was so displeased at the lack of fear that appeared in the face of Christiane Neumann, the wonderful girl actress who was playing the part of Arthur, that, snatching the irons from Hubert's hand, he advanced towards her with so fearful and threatening a countenance, that the girl fainted away, quite overcome by terror. Somewhat similar to this was Booth's experience when he first acted the ghost to Betterton's Hamlet. The latter actor had so wonderful a command of facial expression of emotion that when as Hamlet he became aware of the presence of his father's ghost, he is said to have completely lost his usual ruddy colour, and instantly to have turned quite white, deeply impressing the spectators with the reality of the apparition. When Booth first acted the ghost, Betterton's appearance so horrified and upset him as to render him incapable of speaking his part. At one time, during Garrick's management of Drury Lane, the 'Taming of the Shrew' was being performed. Petruchio was played by Woodward—

Woodward, endow'd with various tricks of face,
Great master in the science of grimace—

and the Katherine was the famous Kitty Clive. In the fourth act, where the shrew and her tamer are at supper, Woodward, in one of his mad fits, stuck a fork in Mrs. Clive's finger, and in pushing her off the stage, he is said to have been so much in earnest as to throw her down, but as the two were not on altogether friendly terms, these little accidents were probably not quite so accidental as they appeared to be.

Actual deaths upon the stage, or attacks of illness ending ultimately in death, have been very common. A long catalogue of actors and actresses whose careers have thus tragically terminated might be given, but a few of the more notable instances may

suffice. In 1757 Mrs. Woffington, as Rosalind, was speaking the epilogue to 'As You Like It,' but after uttering the words, 'If I were a woman, I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me,' she was rendered speechless by paralysis. Molière, while acting in the fourth representation of his own 'Le Malade Imaginaire,' became suddenly ill and died in a few hours. In 1729 a singular accident occurred to Michael Baron, a famous tragedian, who was known as the French Garrick. While acting in the 'Cid,' he pushed aside a sword which lay in his way on the boards, and in doing so hurt his toe. The wound was neglected and mortified, and in a short time the actor was dead. This Baron was wonderfully vain of his abilities; he is reported to have said that the world might see once in a century a 'Cæsar,' but that it required a thousand years to produce a 'Baron!' Woodward, the comic actor already mentioned, died in 1777 from injuries he received in jumping upon a table on the stage. Edmund Kean, as is well known, was seized with his last illness while acting Othello at Covent Garden. John Palmer, the actor who first filled the part of Joseph Surface, was playing in 'The Stranger' at Liverpool, on August 2, 1798, and after speaking the words in the fourth act, 'Oh, God! God! there is another and a better world,' he dropped dead at the feet of a brother actor. Mr. Buckstone was witness to a tragic scene one night in 1859 at a theatre in Mobile, in the United States. 'Our theatre,' he wrote, 'was the scene of a terrible affair last night, the murder of one of the actors, a Mr. Ewing, who was acting with us in "My Old Woman" the part of Cardinal Girouette. After the first act, a Miss Hamblin, who was performing Victor the page, in the same piece, went into the dressing-room and stabbed the young man. Of course we were obliged to dismiss the audience.' Singularly enough, the murderess escaped conviction on the ground that her victim *might* have died from disease of the heart, from which he suffered, if he had not been stabbed!

Sometimes, through ill-considered actions or gestures on the part of the actors, or by reason of bungling stage management, very absurd 'unrehearsed effects' have been obtained. The ill-fated tragedian, G. V. Brooke, was once playing Iago, and as part of his costume was wearing a breastplate of white buckskin, heavily pipe-clayed. As he uttered the words 'I can lay my hand upon my heart and say——' he smote his breast with his hand, and immediately became almost invisible in a cloud of pipe-clay, to the intense amusement of the audience. Dr. Johnson's 'Irene' was

produced at Drury Lane by Garrick on February 6, 1749, under the title of 'Mahomet and Irene.' 'The play went off tolerably,' says Dr. Adams, in the account he gave Boswell of the event, 'till it came to the conclusion, when Mrs. Pritchard, the heroine of the piece, was to be strangled on the stage, and was to speak two lines with the bowstring round her neck. The audience cried out 'Murder! Murder!' She several times attempted to speak, but in vain. At last she was obliged to go off the stage alive!' This strangling scene, it may be noted, was suggested by Garrick, and was contrary to the author's judgment. Some of Macready's early experiences were amusing. On one occasion, at a country theatre, 'Monk' Lewis's play of 'The Castle Spectre' was to be given. When the evening came, the actor cast for the part of Angelo was missing. The courageous manager of the house, although he did not know the words, offered to take the part, if only he could have a hint or two as to the situation to be depicted. Macready accordingly told him that Angelo had been unjustly imprisoned, but 'comes out from his dungeon weary and emaciated.' This was enough for the too ardent manager. He went on to the stage and astonished the audience by delivering the following exordium: 'Alas! worn with travel, faint with long confinement, cruelly imprisoned for sixteen long years, and during that long and bitter period having tasted no food!'—an announcement that naturally evoked roars of laughter. At another time, when Macready was playing Virginius at a miserably equipped theatre at Kendal, there were only two 'supers' provided to bear the dead body of Dentatus off the stage. So instead of carrying it off with due solemnity, they set the supposed corpse upon its feet, and each supporting an arm, marched it off erect with eyes closed in slow time amidst the loud laughter of the spectators. An absurd ending was given to 'Don Giovanni' at a San Francisco theatre a few years ago. At rehearsal in the morning, the Don had been absent, and the final scene in which he was to be carried off by two devils was rehearsed by the representative of Leporello with the two 'supers' who were to play the diabolical parts. When the evening came, and the opera approached its conclusion, the two obtuse devils seized upon Leporello and bore him off, struggling and protesting, to their own tropical fatherland, taking his struggles and protests to be only his very realistic acting. Meanwhile the poor Don stood bewildered and helpless upon the stage until a compassionate prompter in his shirt-sleeves appeared, and led him ignominiously away.

MADEMOISELLE.

A STORY IN TWO PARTS.

BY MRS. OLIPHANT.

PART II.

CHAPTER V.

CLAIRE DE CASTEL-SOMBRE reached her room in a condition of mind in which, though this was quite unusual, she forgot altogether that she was Mademoiselle and became herself, a woman of strong feelings, great personal pride, and a temperament impassioned and imperious rather than subdued and calm. It was subdued under the burden of all those necessities which made her natural impetuosity almost a crime, so out of place was it, and out of keeping with every circumstance around her; but such subjugation, being artificial, is always at the mercy of an emotion or an impulse too strong for manufactured bonds, and at this moment the natural flood had swelled beyond all restraint. Her usual paleness was flushed with angry colour. Her eyes shone, her whole figure thrilled with an excitement which was beyond all restraint. A curious consequence, one would suppose, of a proposal of marriage made by a young man considered eligible in every way in circles much more exacting than Mrs. Leicester Wargrave's daughters or sister, much less her governess. But Claire was roused by emotions which would not have influenced these young ladies. It was not that there was anything in the English language which prevented her full understanding of what was said to her, or in the habits of Englishmen; but perhaps something of French breeding, and something of the involuntary depression and susceptibility which are fostered by such a position as hers, turned her from the natural interpretation of such an overture to a strained and false one. She thought that she had been insulted by a light proposal which meant nothing, which was not intended to mean anything, which was a sort of jibe and no more; and every sentiment in her mind, as well as every drop of blood in her veins, seemed to rise up again. 'You might marry me;' it meant contempt, or suggestive of an impossible escape from the subdued state which,

in the first place, it was insulting for any man to remark upon. A woman who does her duty in the position which her circumstances compel her to accept, whose pride lies in accepting those circumstances as not alone the only possible, but as the most natural and dignified, is not a woman to be insulted, she said to herself, passionately stamping her foot upon the floor in her paroxysm of wounded pride and feeling. In her usual condition Mademoiselle would have been bitterly ashamed of that stamp upon the floor. She was even now, in the fumes of her passion, and blushed for herself, clenching her hands, which was a noiseless operation, to stay in herself any possible repetition of that *bêtise*. All good feeling, all honour, all justice even, forbade that a woman should be jeered at for circumstances she could not help, circumstances which her strength lay in making the best of, in taking the sting out of by a dignified acceptance of them, in which there should be neither question nor assumption of injury, nor the pose of a person wronged. Above all things that pose of wrong was abhorrent to Claire. It went against her pride to acknowledge that she was in an inferior position, a dependent, and in the cold shade. Her pride had been to ignore all that, to define her place as clearly as possible, and make it fully comprehensible that it was the place which she chose and that pleased her best. To remark upon it at all, as Mr. Charles Wargrave had done, even though in a way that was intended to be flattering, was very bad taste, to say the least; but to end these remarks by such a suggestion, by an offensive jest, was an insult in every sense of the word. Her blood boiled in her veins. She walked up and down the room to wear out as far as she could the exasperation that possessed her, not stamping her foot any more, which was a humiliating confession of weakness, but pacing up and down because she was incapable of keeping quiet. A woman who had always avoided any folly of so-called sensitiveness, who had accepted everything with a smiling face, never murmured, never taken offence, consented to be Mademoiselle, and to dignify the title by the perfect philosophy of her self-adaptation to it—and after all these years, after all these heroisms, after her proud self-denials and self-subjugation, to be thus insulted! a sneer flung full in her face, a dart of contempt to her heart! Mademoiselle felt as if that sneer had struck her like a blow. Her face burned with the smart of it; she had the sensation of the physical shock as well as of the rush of blood to the brain which is its result.

And there was this special smart in it, that she had been beginning to find in Charles Wargrave a friendly figure, a sympathetic look. He had not been so often in the schoolroom, so often at the luncheon-table, without exchanging now and then a word with herself which had made her feel that he was more akin to her than his relations were, more able to understand. The people under whose roof she had lived for a year had not the faintest beginning of understanding, nor were they likely to have it should she remain there for five years more, which was very likely if she continued to 'give satisfaction.' But he had looked at her now and then as if he recognised that she was an individual, and not merely Mademoiselle. He had asked her opinion on one or two subjects on which he and she were in accord against the other stolid couple whose point of view was so different. Mademoiselle had not been able to deny to herself—nay, had done so with serious pleasure—that she liked to see M. le Cousin, that he was one of the few people whose entrance was agreeable to her. The fact that he was young made no impression upon this well-trained stoic. She herself was old, she was on the level of men ten years her senior, according to a well-understood chronology current in society. There might not be, perhaps, much actual difference between them in point of years, but, according to this system, she was at least ten years in advance of her male contemporaries. It is difficult, perhaps, to know the reason why, but it is perfectly understood by everybody. She was 'old enough to be his mother,' and she had no feeling that it was otherwise. She regarded him as so completely out of her sphere, in character and in age, as well as in circumstances, that it had never occurred to the imagination of Claire that he and she should meet anywhere save as they sometimes did, on the ground of a mutual opinion, a common taste. But this was enough to make her feel that it was an outrage greater and more painful than usual, that scorn or insult should come from him.

There was a knock at the door while Claire had as yet scarcely regained any of her usual composure. 'Please, Mademoiselle, mother wants to know if you're coming down for tea?'

She paused a moment to master herself, and then opened the door. 'Not this afternoon, Edith. As you are going out with your mother I am going to begin my mending, do you see?' There were some garments laid out upon the bed that supported her plea. The little girl cast a glance upon the high colour, so

unusual in her governess's cheeks, and ran off, with a vague sense of something which she did not understand.

'She's not coming; she's going to mend her things; and, oh! mamma, she's got such a red face, like she does when she's furious with us!'

'To hear these little monkeys,' said Mrs. Wargrave, 'you would think Mademoiselle had the temper of a fiend. But she hasn't, Charlie; don't take up a false impression. She is really one of the best-tempered women I ever knew.'

If anyone had looked at Charles Wargrave at that moment it would have been seen that he had 'a red face' too; but he said nothing, and presently went away.

That evening, sitting alone in the schoolroom, having so exercised the power over herself which she had acquired by the practice of many years as to banish the unusual colour from her face, to subdue the over-beating of the heart and pulses, and to present to the eager eyes of the children, when they returned from their drive, the same calm countenance with which they were acquainted, Mademoiselle received a letter which made her glad that she was alone, with nobody to spy the changes of her face. It was very short, and, though she had never seen his handwriting before, she knew that it was from Charles Wargrave before she had taken it from the attendant housemaid's tray. It was as follows:

'I feel that I have offended you, though I scarcely know why. I spoke hastily, without considering the form of words I used. If you had been an Englishwoman you would perhaps have thought less of that: but as you are you are the only woman in the world for me. My hasty proposal was not hasty in meaning, and it was made in all reverence and respect, though I fear you did not think so. Forgive what has seemed to you careless in the expression, but believe in the love that made it. Say I was rude, and punish me as you please, but reply; and oh! if you can, accept

'Yours ever and only,
'C. W.'

Mademoiselle read this letter over three times, almost without breathing, and then she laid it down on the table before her, and grew, not red, but pale. Her lips dropped apart with a long-drawn breath which seemed to come from the very depths of her being; the blood seemed to ebb away from her heart; she grew white like marble, and almost as chill, with a nervous shiver. She was

terrified, panic-stricken, dismayed. If all the anger had gone out of her it had been replaced by something else more trying still. Astonishment in the first place, dismay, a panic which impelled her to rise and flee. But this it was impossible to do out of this well-regulated house, where all went on with such un-failing routine, and there were no breaches either of decorum or of hours. To have gone out after dinner, unless for an understood engagement, would have scandalised every inmate, as well as Mademoiselle herself, who also had far too much good sense to allow for a moment, even to herself, that it was possible to run away. No; she had, as is usual, something much worse to do—to remain; to meet the man who, she thought, had insulted her, who, instead of insulting her, had done her the greatest honour in his power, who had attracted her sympathy and liking, and now had made himself one of the most interesting of all mankind in her eyes—to meet him without betraying by a sign that anything had ever passed between them more than good-night or good-morrow, to discourage and dismiss him summarily at once, yet to be always ready to receive him when he deigned to converse with her, as though never a word had been said between them which all the world need not hear. Mademoiselle's first impulse was absolute dismay; the embarrassment of the situation struck her above everything else. Everything about it was embarrassing. She would have to answer his letter, yet she must put her answer in the post herself, keeping it away from all prying eyes: for why should she write to Charles Wargrave, the cousin of the house? Supposing that the housemaid saw it, that Edith or Dorothy saw it? Though she was utterly blameless, how could that be proved—how could she keep their untutored minds from drawing their own conclusions? She had nothing whatever to blush for, and yet she blushed instinctively, involuntarily, at the idea of being found out in a correspondence with Charles Wargrave. How much more, she said to herself with fright, had she accepted his offer (wild thought which sent all her pulses beating!) And then she must meet him absolutely unmoved; not only without a look or word, but without the suspicion of a breath that could have any meaning. The air must not move a fold of her dress or lock on her forehead, lest it might be supposed that she trembled. These were difficulties of which he would never think—how should he?—of which nobody would think who was not in her position. And though nothing else came of it, this must come of it.

Nothing else! What else? She paused, with a shock of abrupt cessation in her thoughts, as one does who suddenly stops running. What else? Nothing else except this—that she could never be at her ease, but must always seem to be at her ease, in Charles Wargrave's presence, again.

In the meantime, the first thing to be done was to answer his letter; that was a thing that could not be delayed, that must be accomplished at once. And yet it took a long time even to begin it. Mademoiselle arranged the paper upon her desk a dozen times before she was satisfied. She did more than this. She shut up the schoolroom writing-table, where all her usual writing was done, and fetched from her bedroom a little old desk, a relic of girlish days, once pretty in its inlaid work and velvet lining, now sadly shabby in faded finery. She did not even say to herself what freak of fancy it was which made her produce this old toy, this treasury of girlish souvenirs, for the serious purpose she had in hand. It gave her a great deal of trouble, for there was no ink in the minute ink-bottle, no pens in the tray, nothing she wanted. She had to bring the paper from the writing-table, and all the other accessories. Even after she had surmounted these obstacles there was still a considerable delay. She wrote a letter in French, and then one in English, and tore them both into small pieces, and it was not till almost midnight, after all the other members of Mr. Leicester Wargrave's family were in bed, that Mademoiselle succeeded in producing the following, which, though it did not please her, she sent, as being the best she could do:

‘I am very thankful, sir, that it is not as I at first supposed: and indeed I ought to have known better, and never to have believed that an English gentleman would insult a woman in my position. I thank you that you have not done so; but, on the contrary, complimented and indeed flattered me to a very high degree.

‘In return I send you a very direct answer, as you have a right. There can be no question, sir, of my accepting a gift far too great, which I had never anticipated, to which my thoughts were never directed at all. It would be a poor compliment in return for your goodness if I should take what you offer as carelessly as if it were a cup of tea you were offering me. Oh, no! no! I respect you too much to do so. A moment's thought will also show you how very unsuitable in every way it would be. You are young, you are rich, you have all the world can give. I am old—a

middle-aged woman. I have nothing at all but the *beau nom* you were so good as to recognise. It does not mean even what it would mean in England, it means nothing; in my own country, being poor, I would not even carry it. My mother calls herself in Paris only Madame Castel. And, chief of all, I am more old than you, middle-aged; it is therefore a thing beyond the possibility of even taking into consideration at all.

‘Adieu, monsieur, je vous remercie de tout mon cœur; vous ne m’avez pas insultée, vous m’avez flattée; je réponds avec une vive reconnaissance. Que le bon Dieu vous donne tous ce que vous pouvez désirer hors la pauvre et obscure créature qui s’appellera toujours

‘Votre obligée,

‘CLAIRE DE CASTEL-SOMBRE.’

She wrote this in great haste at last, and without even trusting herself to read it over, fastened it hastily into its envelope. She was so frightened lest anybody should see it—lest it should fall under the eyes of any youthful observer, whether pupil or attendant—that she put it by her bedside unaddressed until the morning, when she concealed it in her pocket until, in the course of the morning’s walk, she could put it into the nearest post-office. Perhaps it was her sense of wishing to conceal which made the children’s chatter so significant to her. ‘Oh, Mademoiselle,’ said Edith, ‘why didn’t you send your letters out for the early post with mother’s?’ ‘And why didn’t you give it me to carry?’ cried Dorothy; ‘you know I’m always the postman.’ ‘Mother would say it was to somebody, and you didn’t want us to see the address,’ said the one little importunate. ‘And you needn’t have been so careful, Mademoiselle,’ said the other, ‘for I would never have told who it was.’ ‘There is no question of telling,’ said Mademoiselle very gravely, to stop further discussion; but as she turned away from the post-office another dreadful and unforeseen accident happened. Charles Wargrave came up to the group. She felt her heart leap from where it was, very low down in her being, up, up to her throat. The children seized upon their cousin as usual, while she walked along by their side with downcast head. They told him all the story, how Mademoiselle had been posting a letter and would not let anyone see the address. ‘And I always put the letters in the post,’ said Dorothy, aggrieved. Mademoiselle kept her eyes down, and would not meet the look which she divined.

CHAPTER VI.

It would not be easy to find a more difficult position than that in which Mademoiselle now found herself. She had just put into the post-box a letter to the man who came up at the moment, almost before it had disappeared, and before she had returned his bow, and evaded the hand held out to her in greeting. The children had informed him of this almost clandestine letter, which the governess would intrust to nobody, which she had posted with her own hands. He gave her a rapid look of inquiry, which she saw without making any response to it. She could even see, somehow, without looking, the flush that rose to his face on this intimation. He knew as well as she knew that the letter was to himself, and, perhaps, perceived for the first time, in a sudden flash of unconsciously communicated feeling, how it was that she had posted it herself, and the reluctance she must feel to allow the fact of her communications with him to be known. The flush on his face was partly pain at this discovery, and partly suspense on his own part, and the tantalising consciousness that, though she was so near him, and a word—even a look—might enlighten him, neither word nor look was to be had from her. She had completely relapsed into Mademoiselle—the careful guardian of the children, a member of a distinct species, an official personage, not Claire de Castel-Sombre, nor any mere individual. She was at her post like a sentinel on duty, to whom the concerns of his personal life must all be thrown into the background. There was no place in the world where she would not rather have been than walking along the road towards Kensington Gardens by Charles Wargrave's side, though with the potent interposition of Edith and Dorothy between. But, though he felt this, he went on, with a curious fascination, prolonging the strange thrill of sensation in himself, and glad to prolong it in her, to keep up in her the excitement and whirl of feeling which he knew must exist in the strange, concealed circumstances which for the moment, at least, bound the two together. To think that they should be walking thus, not speaking, she, at least, never turning her head his way, who possibly might be destined to spend all their lives together, to be one for the rest of their days! Charles felt, with a sickening sensation of failure, that there was little prospect of this; but yet that moment could never, whatever happened, pass

from the memories of either for all their lives to come. He liked to prolong it, though he was aware it must give her pain, though it made himself giddy and dazed in the confusion and suspense. There was a cruel kind of pleasure in it—a pleasure that stung, and smarted, and thrilled every nerve. They walked thus, with the children chattering, along the side of Kensington Gardens towards Hyde Park, all the freshness of morning in the air, the sounds softened by summer and that well-being and enjoyment of existence which warmth and sunshine bring. When at last he left them, he would not let Mademoiselle off that touch of the hands which she had the excuse of French habit for eluding, but he the settled form of English use and wont to justify his insistence upon. It was another caprice of the excitement in his mind to insist upon shaking hands: but the hurried, reluctant touch taught him nothing, except that which he did not desire to learn.

Mademoiselle reached home much exhausted by her walk, and retired to her room, complaining of headache, which was very unusual; but not before the whole history of the morning had been reported to Mrs. Wargrave—the mysterious letter put in the post, the meeting with Uncle Charlie, and all the rest. Happily, no member of the Wargrave family required any reason, save his devotion to themselves, for Charles Wargrave's appearance. 'He is so devoted to the children; it is quite beautiful in a young man!' their mother said. But she felt at the same time that Mademoiselle's behaviour required looking into. A mysterious letter transferred from her pocket to the post-office, though Dolly was always the postman, and loved to be so employed—as if she did not want the address to be seen! and then the mysterious headache, so unusual in Mademoiselle, who, in delightful contrast to other governesses, never had headaches, never was ill, but always ready for her duties. Mrs. Leicester Wargrave was divided between the fear of any change which might deprive her of so admirable a governess, and that interest which every woman feels in the possibility of a romance going on under her eyes, and of which she has a chance of being the confidante. She graciously consented that Mademoiselle should not come downstairs to luncheon, but paid her a visit afterwards in her room, with every intention of finding out what was the matter. She found Mademoiselle in her dressing-gown—that famous white dressing-gown—retired into her own chamber, but with nothing the matter, she protested; no need for the doctor—only a headache, the most common thing in the world.

‘But not common with you, Mademoiselle,’ Mrs. Wargrave said, drawing a chair near, and putting her hand on the governess’s wrist to feel if she were feverish; for, of course, she knew, or thought she knew, something of nursing, as became a woman of her time.

‘No, it is not usual with me; I am glad, for it is not pleasant,’ said Mademoiselle.

‘I am very glad, too, I assure you; for a person in the house with a continual headache is the most horrid thing! It is always such a pleasure to find you ready for everything—always well.’

Mademoiselle smiled, but said nothing. She was not without sympathy for the employers of governesses who had perpetual headaches; at the same time, it is, perhaps, not exhilarating to be complimented on your health as a matter of convenience to another—though quite reasonable, as she was ready to allow.

‘That is what makes me think,’ said Mrs. Wargrave, ‘that you must have something on your mind.’

This assault was so entirely unexpected that Mademoiselle not only flushed to her very hair, but started from her half-reclining attitude in her chair.

‘Ah,’ said Mrs. Wargrave, ‘I thought as much! I don’t call myself clever, but it isn’t easy to deceive me in that sort of a way, Mademoiselle. I have noticed for a long time that you were not looking like yourself. Something has happened. The children—they are such quick observers, you know, and they tell me everything, poor things!—said something about a letter. You know, I am sure, that I don’t want to pry into your affairs, but sometimes it does one good to confide in a friend—and I have always wished my governesses to consider me as a friend—especially you, who give so little trouble. I thought it might, perhaps, be a comfort to you to speak.’

Mademoiselle, during this speech, had time to recover herself. She said only, however, with the most polite and easy way of evasion, ‘I know that you are always very kind.’

‘I am sure that I always mean to be,’ her patroness said, and she sat with her eyes fixed upon the patient, expectant—delighted with the idea of a sentimental confession, and yet rather alarmed lest this might lead to an intimation that it would be necessary to look for a new governess. Mrs. Leicester Wargrave meant no harm to anybody, and was, on the whole, an amiable woman; but, as a matter of fact, the thing that would have truly

delighted her, real pleasure without any penalty, would have been the confession from Mademoiselle of an unhappy love.

And now there suddenly occurred an idea, half mischievous, half humorous, to Claire, who, in her own personality, had once been *espiègle*, and was not now superior to a certain pleasure in exposing the pretences of life. She scarcely understood how it was that, having finally and very seriously rejected the curious proposal which certainly, for a day or two, had done her the good service of quickening the monotony of life, she should have the sudden impulse of taking advice about it, and asking Mrs. Wargrave, of all persons in the world, what she ought to do. Caprices of this kind seize the most serious in a moment without any previous intention, and the thought that to get a little amusement out of Charles Wargrave's proposal was permissible, seeing how much embarrassment and annoyance she was sure to get out of it, came to her mind with a flash of amused impulse; she said, 'I did not think I had betrayed myself; and, indeed, it is only for a day or two that I have had anything on my mind.'

'Then there *is* something?' cried Mrs. Wargrave delighted, clasping her hands. 'I was sure of it; I am a dreadful person, Mademoiselle; there is no deceiving *me*.'

'So it would appear,' said Claire, with a gleam of humour which was a little compensation, she felt, for her trouble. And she added, casting down her eyes, 'I have had a—very unexpected—proposal of marriage.'

'I knew it!' Mrs. Wargrave said. She added, more warmly than she felt, 'And I hope it is a good one—and makes you happy. Tell me all about it, my dear.'

It was not that she had never called Mademoiselle 'my dear' before, for this is a word which glides very easily to some women's lips: but once more it made Claire smile.

'It makes me neither happy nor unhappy,' she said, 'though it is a very good one; for it is not a possible thing; except the trouble of vexing some one, it can do nothing to me.'

'You can't accept it?' Mrs. Wargrave felt a momentary relief, and then a stronger sentiment seized her. She could not bear to have sport spoiled in the matrimonial way. 'But why?' she said. 'Why? Do tell me all about it. If it is a good offer, and there is nothing against the man, why shouldn't you accept it, Mademoiselle?'

'I have many reasons, Madame; but the first is, that I do not

care for him at all. You do not accept an offer which you have never expected, never thought of as possible.'

'Oh, if that is all!' said Mrs. Wargrave. 'Good heavens! nobody ever would be married if that was to be the rule. Why, I never was more surprised in my life than when Mr. Wargrave proposed to me! That's nothing—nothing! If it is a good match——'

'It is much too good a match. The gentleman is not only much, much richer than I—that is nothing, for I am poor—but he is better in the world in every way. His family would consider it a *mésalliance*: and it would be so completely to my interest——'

'But, good heavens!' cried Mrs. Wargrave again, 'what does that matter? Let his family complain—that's their affair. You surely would never throw up a good match for that? Is there anything against the man?'

'Nothing!' said Mademoiselle with some earnestness.

'Then, what does it matter about his family? I suppose he's old enough to judge for himself? And he could make nice settlements, and all that?'

'Very likely—I do not know. He is rich, I am aware of that.'

'You surprise me very much,' cried Mrs. Wargrave. 'I have always heard that the French cared nothing for sentiment, that it was always reason and the *dot*, and all that, that was considered. Yet, here you are, talking like a silly girl. Mademoiselle, if you will be guided by me, you will not let any romantic nonsense stand in the way of your advancement. Dear me! you don't disapprove of married life, I suppose? You don't want to set up as superior to your neighbours? And, only think what your position is—Mr. Wargrave and I are very much satisfied with you, and I had hoped you would stay with us as long as Edie and Dolly require a governess; but you must reflect that you won't be any younger when that time comes. We are all growing older, and the time will come when ladies will think you are not lively enough to take the charge of young children; they will think you are not active enough to go out for their walks. Many people have a prejudice against old governesses. I want to put it quite clearly before you, Mademoiselle. Think what it is to go on slaving when you are an old woman. And you will never be able to earn enough to keep you comfortable if you should live to be

past work; and what will you do? Whereas, here is, apparently, an excellent chance, a certain provision for you, and a far more comfortable life than any governess could ever expect. Goodness! what do you look for? You must accept it; you must not throw such a chance away. I can't hear of it; and anyone that had your real interests at heart would say the same.'

Mrs. Wargrave spoke like a woman inspired. She reddened a little in her earnestness, she used little gestures of natural eloquence. All selfish thoughts of retaining so good a governess for Edith and Dorothy had gone out of her mind. She could not endure that such a piece of folly should be perpetrated under her eyes.

'All that I know very well,' said Mademoiselle. 'I have gone over it too often not to know.'

'And yet!' cried Mrs. Wargrave, with a sort of exasperation. 'Come, come,' she added with a laugh, 'you are only playing with my curiosity. Of course you can't possibly mean to do such a silly thing as refuse. Poor man! when everything is in his favour and nothing against him! I never heard of such a thing. I can't have it! Your friends *must* interpose.'

'But his friends will be most indignant—they will be in a state of fury—they will say I am an adventuress, a schemer, a designing woman—everything that can be said.'

'Let them say!' cried Mrs. Wargrave in her enthusiasm; 'what have you to do with that? Of course they'll say it. Men's friends always do: but what is it to you what they say? that's their concern, not yours. I suppose he is old enough to judge for himself.'

'That is the last and greatest objection of all,' said Mademoiselle. 'He is quite old enough to judge for himself: but he is younger than I am. If all the rest could be put right, there is still that.'

'Oh!' said Mrs. Wargrave, making a pause. 'Well, that is a pity,' she added slowly. 'I don't much fancy these marriages myself. But,' she said, pausing again, 'it can't be denied that they turn out very well. I have known three or four, and they've all turned out well. And, besides, that's the man's own affair. If he is pleased, I don't see why *you* should object. Is it much?' she asked with a little hesitation.

'I am sure as much as—two or three years,' said Mademoiselle firmly.

Mrs. Wargrave was so indignant that she sprang from the chair

and all but stamped her foot. 'Two or three years!' she cried. 'Do you mean to laugh in my face, Mademoiselle? I thought you were going to say a dozen at least. I supposed it must be some boy of twenty. Two or three years!'

'No, not twenty, nor thirty, but still younger than I am.'

'This is quite absurd,' said Mrs. Wargrave sharply; 'a year or two makes *no* difference, and you must let me say that it will be not only foolish but wicked, *criminal* to let such an opportunity slip. How can you think of doing it, you who have a mother, and nothing but your own work to look to? How do you know how long you may be able to work? how can you tell what may come upon you if you slight a distinct interposition of Providence like this? I can't imagine what you are thinking of. Do I know the gentleman? Is he a Frenchman? I hope, when you have thought it over, you will not be such a fool as to send such a man away.'

'No, he is not a Frenchman. He is English,' said Mademoiselle, eluding the other question. 'And do you think I could bear it that his family should call me all the names and turn against him?'

'His family!' repeated Mrs. Wargrave with fine scorn. 'What have his family to do with it? It will be the most dreadful folly in the world to give up your own happiness for anything his family can say.'

She had no patience with Mademoiselle. She preached quite a clever little sermon upon the necessity and duty of thinking of herself, and of the ingratitude not only to Providence, which had afforded this chance, and to the man who had given it, but even to the people under whose roof she was, and who had her best interests at heart, should she neglect such a means of securing her own comfort and independence. Mrs. Wargrave ended by feeling herself aggrieved. Mademoiselle's culpable sentimentality, her rejection of the best of advice, her obstinacy and wrong-headedness would, she felt sure, recoil upon herself—but in the meantime Mrs. Wargrave could not conceal that she was wounded, deeply wounded, by seeing her advice so slighted—'Though it is yourself who will be the chief sufferer, Mademoiselle,' she said, with almost vindictive vehemence. And it was in this mood that she left the room, leaving, so to speak, a prophecy of doom behind her. Mademoiselle, she said, would repent but once, and that would be all her life.

Mademoiselle tried to laugh when Mrs. Wargrave was gone, but the effort was too much, and she astonished herself very much by suddenly bursting into tears instead. What for, she could not tell. It was, she supposed, a case of overstrained nerves and bodily exhaustion, for she felt herself curiously worn out. But afterwards she grew more calm, and it was impossible for her not to go over Mrs. Wargrave's arguments, and to find in them many things which she could not gainsay. The smile that came over her face at the thought of her own little mystification, the snare which had been laid without intention, and into which her adviser had fallen so easily, was very transient; for, indeed, the oracle which she had so lightly evoked had spoken the words of truth and soberness. Claire asked herself whether, on the whole, this matter-of-fact and worldly woman was not right. Poor, solitary and, if not old, yet within sight of the possibility of growing into what was old age for a woman in her position, had she any right to reject the chance of comfort and advancement thus held out to her? Had she any right to do it? She asked herself this question so much more at her ease that she had already rejected it, and Charles Wargrave must already have accepted her decision, so that she said to herself it was only an hypothetical case she was considering. The question was, under such circumstances, a mere speculation. What should a woman do? Poverty before her on one side and wealth on the other—obscurity, helplessness, the absence of all power to succour or aid, and possibly want at the end—while with a word she could have all that a woman could desire, every possibility of helpfulness, comfort for her family, freedom for herself, the freedom from all cares and personal bondage. And it was not as if there was anything wrong involved. Mademoiselle knew herself not only to be a woman who would do her duty, but one who would have no thought beyond it or struggle against it. If she married a man she would be a good wife to him, one in whom his soul might trust. Was it necessary to reject the overture which would bring so much, because she had not that one ethereal thing—the sentiment above duty, the uncertain errant principle called Love, to justify the transaction? She asked herself the question, with all the French part of her nature and breeding urging her towards the common-sense view. Marriage meant a great deal more than mere loving. It meant the discharge of many duties which she could undertake and faithfully do. It meant a definite office in life which she knew she could

fulfil. It meant fellowship, companionship, the care of joint interests, the best advice, support, and backing up that one human being could give another. She felt, though she would not have said it, that all this she could give, far better, perhaps, than a girl could, who would be able to fancy herself in love. Ah! but then—— The other side of her character turned round and cut her short in her thinking, but with an abruptness that hurt her. She gave an almost sobbing sigh of regret and something like pain.

Then another part of Mrs. Wargrave's argument came to her mind. Let his family say what they pleased, that was their concern. After all there, too, was the teaching of common sense. Mademoiselle had felt as if it would be something like treachery to live in the Wargraves' house and allow their relation to make such overtures to her. Why? The Wargraves were kind enough, good enough, but not more to her than she to them. They gave her the food and shelter and wages they had engaged to give, and she gave to them a full equivalent. They never considered her but as their children's governess. On what rule should she consider them as something more than her employers, as people to whom she owed a higher observance beyond and above her duty? Gratitude?—there was no reason for gratitude. There is a curious prejudice in favour of being grateful to the people under whose roof you live, however light may be the bond, however little the bargain may be to your advantage. Mademoiselle knew that the day she ceased to be useful to the Wargraves they would tell her so, and arrange that she should leave them, not unkindly but certainly, on the common law which exists between employers and employed. And why should she abandon any hope of improving her condition through a visionary sentiment of treachery to them? Ah! she said to herself again, but then—— What was it that stopped her thoughts in both these cases? In neither was there anything wrong—no law of man, none even of God would be broken. She would wrong no one. And yet—— She ended her long course of thinking with a sigh. An invisible barrier stood before her which she regretted, which was unreal, which was, perhaps, merely fantastic—a folly, not a thing to interfere with any sensible career. But there it stood.

What a good thing that the case was merely hypothetical, everything being in reality quite fixed and decided, to be reopened no more!

CHAPTER VII.

THAT night late there came a note by the last post—that post which sometimes adds horrors to the night in London, with missives which interfere hopelessly with the quiet of the hour. In it Charles Wargrave thanked her that she did not accept his heart carelessly, as if it were a cup of tea. He thanked her for her decided answer, but he thought she would at least understand him when he said that, so far as he was concerned, it could not stop there. Next time it would not at least be a question which she had not anticipated, and he would still hope that her prayer for his welfare might be accomplished without the condition she put upon it—with which there could be no welfare for him at all. It cannot be said that, though her heart beat at the sight of it, this letter was a great surprise to Claire. Notwithstanding her conviction that it was an hypothetical case which she was putting to herself, she felt now that she had not indeed really imagined or believed that Charles Wargrave, a man who had got his own will all his life, was now to be thwarted in so important a matter without resistance or protest. She felt at once that this was what was to be expected. The letter, however, piqued her a little—annoyed her a little. It would have been reasonable that he should have met her arguments one way or other. It would have been civil to have protested, and declared that she was not old, though she pleased to call herself so. Though Mademoiselle was herself so full of common-sense on this subject, as on most others, she had a feeling that it was a failure of politeness on the part of Charles Wargrave not to have said something about it. When she discovered this sentiment in her own spirit she was a little ashamed of it, but still it was there. And the note in general said so little that it piqued and interested her. It was skilfully done; but Mademoiselle did not see this, neither, perhaps, did the writer. Perhaps Mademoiselle was momentarily vexed, too, that there was no need to answer it. If there is one weakness which is common to human nature it is the pleasure which people take in explaining themselves, especially on emotional subjects, so as to leave their correspondents in no doubt as to their real meaning. Claire had written very hurriedly the first time, with a genuine desire to sweep such a troublesome episode out of her life. She felt now that it would be pleasant to fill out and strengthen all these argu-

ments, and especially to bring out that point of age of which he had taken no notice. He might, perhaps, from what she had herself said, think her forty or more, seeing that he did not object to her statement about her age; and she would have liked, while reiterating that, to have made it quite clear what her age was—not, after all, so much as he might think. But her good sense was sufficiently effective still to make her feel that no answer was needed to his letter. She put it away in the little faded desk, which, perhaps, was doing it too much honour. There the matter would end, notwithstanding what he said. He should find it impossible to get any opportunity of speech; nothing would induce her to listen to him in his cousin's house—nothing, though she had felt all the force of Mrs. Wargrave's arguments about the family. In short, it must be allowed that, in respect to the question, in this, its second phase, Claire de Castel-Sombre did not carry with her all the prudence and experience of Mademoiselle, but was sometimes in her thoughts more like a petulant girl than was at all consistent with her character of a philosopher or a mature woman of the world.

And then there occurred what can only be called a pause in life. Everything, of course, went on quite as usual; but in this particular matter there was silence in heaven and earth. Life came to a pause, like that pause in music which gives so much expectancy to what precedes it, so much emphasis and effect to what follows. It is easy to notice the advantage of a pause in music, but not so much in life, where perhaps the occurrence of an interval, whether agreeable or disagreeable, is, while it lasts, exceedingly tedious, involving many stings of disappointment and blank moments of suspense. Claire would not have allowed even to herself that she wanted the sensation, the new condition of affairs to go on, which had suddenly brought a shock of interest and novelty into her monotonous existence. But, all the same, she suffered when it stopped. The monotony to which she had so well schooled herself seemed more monotonous than ever. A restless desire that something should happen dawned within her; not so much that another incident in this history should happen, as that something should happen—an earthquake, a great fire, even a thunderstorm if nothing more. But this desire was in vain, for nothing happened. There was a time of very brilliant yet mild weather, not even too hot, threatening nothing, and all went on in its usual routine. Mr. Charles Wargrave came occasionally to luncheon, as he had been in the habit of doing, but Mademoiselle had always the best of reasons for withdrawing

immediately that the meal was over—lessons that required instant attention, or letters that had to be sent off by the afternoon post. Sometimes she caught a look from him which reproached her, or questioned her, or merely assured her, as a look can do, that he saw through her artifices, yet was not moved by them. She felt the strain upon her nerves of these meetings, which were not meetings at all, and in which no word was exchanged on any private subject; but when he was absent, and did not appear for about a fortnight, strangely enough Claire felt this still more. She said to herself, with a smile, that he was at last convinced and saw the futility of the pursuit; but though the smile ran into a laugh, there was no sense of absolute pleasure in her mind. When an exciting story stops, even when it is only a story in a book, and there are no more accidents and adventures to anticipate, it leaves a dulness behind. And Claire felt a dulness. The story of Charles Wargrave stopped. She did not want it to go on—oh! far from that, she said quickly, with a hot blush; but it left a dulness; as much as that a woman might allow.

The season was just about coming to an end, and Mrs. Leicester Wargrave's engagements were many in the rush of the final gaieties. She had gone out one afternoon, taking the little girls with her, to a garden-party, a thing which did not happen often, but when it did come was a holiday to Mademoiselle. It was the beginning of July, still and warm, and Claire went out with her work to the garden, to a shady corner in which she could be quiet and undisturbed. She had no fear of any interruption: a visitor for herself was the rarest possible occurrence (for people naturally do not like the governess's visitors about, who might be mistaken for visitors of the house), and none of Mrs. Wargrave's visitors were likely to penetrate to the garden, the mistress of the house being absent. Claire had brought out her mending, which was her chief work in her brief moments of solitude. It was in a trim little covered basket, not to offend anybody's eye; and, as a matter of fact, she did more thinking than sewing. The happiness of thinking is when you think about nothing in particular, thinking without an object: and the sense of unusual leisure and quiet, and the soft influences of the air outdoors—which she could enjoy without any anxiety as to Edith exposing herself to the sun, or Dorothy running too fast—had filled Claire's mind with this soft atmosphere of musing without definite thoughts. Stray fancies went flitting through her mind like the little white clouds upon the sky.

She was Claire de Castel-Sombre through and through, she was not Mademoiselle at all. She had forgotten to remember about Charles Wargrave, and the story which had come to a pause.

For once in a way to have got rid of all that, and then to lift your eyes quickly at the sound of a step on the gravel, and to see him, walking out quietly from under the shadow of the trees! Her heart gave a leap as if it had somehow got loose, but she rose to meet him with a countenance which was no longer that of Claire de Castel-Sombre, but the well-trained face of Mademoiselle.

'I am sorry,' she said, 'Mrs. Wargrave and the children are gone out. There is a garden-party at the Merewethers.'

'I know,' he said, 'and hoped to find you alone.'

'They were kind enough to ask me too,' said Mademoiselle.

'I am very glad you did not go; I have been watching for this opportunity so long! I suppose you don't think what it is, to see you across the table, and never have a chance of a word?'

'Monsieur Wargrave,' said Mademoiselle, 'might avoid that by coming—to dinner, for example, when I am not there.'

'It is malice that makes you say so,' he replied. She had changed into French and he followed her lead. 'You know the purpose for which I come. No, I cannot consent to lose my small opportunity, my holiday from observation, by not speaking of what is nearest my heart.'

'Monsieur does not care, then, for spoiling mine?'

'Ah!' he said, 'Mademoiselle de Castel-Sombre, you think you can silence me with that. So you can. If it is, indeed, to take anything from you, to spoil your quiet, of course there cannot be any question on the subject, and I will go away.'

Thus it would have been easy to finish the conversation. No doubt it would have been rude—and to be rude was very abhorrent to all Mademoiselle's notions—still, on such an important issue, and to secure that he should go away! But Mademoiselle evidently would rather suffer than be so impolite, for she answered not a word.

'I must take advantage when I can,' he said, 'or otherwise how am I to make myself known to you—how prepare the way? I will talk on any subject you please. I have not come here to worry you, to press myself upon you like an ice or a cup of tea. How I thank you for that simile! I do not want you to take me, when you take me, as if I were a cup of tea.'

Mademoiselle once more was silent. If she had combatted

the assumption of that *when*, it might have reopened the whole discussion, she said to herself.

'There are certain mistakes about myself I should like to correct,' he said. 'You seem to have thought I was twenty or twenty-five, and I am thirty-four. It is not of much importance, but I should like you to know it. I wonder Mrs. Wargrave, who knows everybody's age, did not inform you of that.'

'She does not care about the ages of men,' said Mademoiselle with an effort. Like many other people, when there was a desperate occasion for keeping up the conversation, she plunged into sarcasm as the easiest way. 'To keep women from going wrong about their age is what she wishes. You know we are sometimes accused of taking off a year or two.'

'Unless when you add a year or two,' he said. She had ventured on a glance upward at him over her work, and he caught the glance, being on the watch, and made a point on his own side by that which replied to it. 'I suppose both have their uses,' he added, 'to attract or to repel.'

'If you think,' said Mademoiselle hastily, 'that all women think of is either to attract or repel——! But even were it so, it is but a small number of women who are within that circle. In youth it may be the object of too many thoughts, but when a woman is in the midst of life, do her thoughts dwell on such arts more than a man's? No, Mr. Wargrave, it is not just to say so.'

'Mademoiselle de Castel-Sombre,' he said with great gravity, pronouncing every syllable, till she smiled at the formality in spite of herself, 'I am not superior to such arts, if I knew how to use them. And, man or woman, I think the desire to please is of itself a great charm.'

'It must be kept within bounds,' she said vaguely, scarcely knowing what it was she said.

'There would be no bounds in mine if I had the luck to succeed,' he said, 'or even the hope of succeeding.' Then he stopped himself with a little abruptness, and there was a silence during which the birds came in singing, and the leaves rustling in a curious little interlude which Mademoiselle never forgot. At last he said: 'The opportunity of speaking with you alone goes to my head. And I run the risk of wearying you, I know, of pressing prematurely. I wish you would tell me—anything you would like me to do.'

'Yes,' she said, suddenly putting down her work and looking

up at him. She saw against the trees, for a moment, his head bent forward, his look of profound pleasure, the expectation in his face. 'If you wish to please me,' she said, 'you will go away.'

It was cruel, and she felt it to be cruel; an insult flung full in his face when he looked for it so little. He sprang suddenly to his feet as if he had been shot. His countenance changed. Mademoiselle bent her head again, not to see what she had done.

'Mademoiselle!' he cried, with a pang in his voice, then composing himself. 'If that is really what you wish—if it is the only thing I can do for you, to relieve you of my presence——'

'Forgive me!' said Mademoiselle, very low. She added more distinctly: 'Monsieur Wargrave will see that here, in the home of his family, who would resent it so much, is the last place in the world——'

'Confound my family!' he cried, then begged her pardon hastily; 'they are not my family—a cousin, to whom I am no more responsible than to his gardener.'

'But I am responsible,' she said. 'She is my—mistress. Ah! whatever glosses we put upon it, that is the case. I will not be dishonourable to listen to what would enrage her and shock her, here.'

'Then I may speak—elsewhere?' he said eagerly.

'There is no elsewhere; we are here. It is the only place where we meet. Monsieur Wargrave must not take advantage of what I say. There is but one good thing and true that can be done.'

'And that is to leave you?' he said despondently. 'Mademoiselle, it is yours to command and mine to obey—but it is cruel. Surely at the most, with all your delicacies and precautions, you cannot think a man's honest love, and wish to commend himself to her, is any shame to a woman?'

'Not if she were a queen!' Claire could not have said otherwise had she died for it; but she did die, or rather put herself to death, and Mademoiselle came back to her place. 'But there are times and seasons, and there are places in which what was honourable becomes profane. If Monsieur Wargrave will put himself in my place, instead of thinking of his own.'

Mademoiselle did not know whether she was most elated or depressed by her victory. When he had left the garden she hurried indoors, feeling that all the peacefulness of her previous mood was gone. The afternoon quiet had been sweet to her, but it was so no more, and all that had made her position endurable

seemed to have gone with it. Why should the life, which she had so carefully shaped into the limitations in which she believed it must be bound for ever, be thus disturbed? She thought with almost resentment that it was for a caprice, for a little additional pleasure to a man who had all the pleasures of life at his command, that this had been done, and that he had thought of himself, and not of her, when he thus took in hand the unsettling of all her views, the disturbance of every plan. It would have been little had he been satisfied with her first reply, had he left her to herself when he saw that there was no response in her to his proposition; but to continue to push on, in spite of her prohibition! She went in angry in her annoyance and trouble, for it was now no use to say to herself, as she had done at first, that it was nothing, a passing folly, to-morrow to be numbered among the follies of the past. Now she knew very well that her life had been disturbed, that the interruption was not a nothing; that the calm had been broken up, and all her rules displaced. And all this by no doing of hers, at the caprice of a young man, who wanted for nothing, to whom, perhaps, it was but one of many diversions! She was very indignant with him as she gained the refuge of her room; but milder thoughts came in, relentings, a curious rueful sense of the interest and variety which he had brought into her monotonous life. She had been contented after a sort. She had fully adapted herself to her fate, and learned to think it not an ill fate, better than so many. But now! And yet there had been a certain pleasure in the disturbance all the same.

Mademoiselle did not see Mrs. Wargrave till next day, when she asked to speak to her, and to that lady's great astonishment put forward a request for a holiday—leave to go to Paris to see her mother, who was ailing and wanted her. Mrs. Wargrave grew pale with astonishment and dismay. 'A holiday, Mademoiselle! to go to Paris! You could not have chosen a more inconvenient time. You know we shall be going to the country in about a month, and how do you suppose I can take the charge of the children, with all I have to do?'

'I will come back before that time,' said Mademoiselle.

'Then it is now directly you want to go? But that is worse and worse, for I have numbers of engagements; and what is to happen to the girls if you are away?'

'I am very sorry,' said Mademoiselle, 'but my mother——'

‘Your mother cannot be more important to you than my children are to me. And you must recollect you have not yet been two years with us, Mademoiselle. I don’t expect any governess to ask for a holiday till after the second year.’

‘I am very sorry,’ said Mademoiselle again; ‘but it is very important for me to go away. I—am not well: I must go—I cannot continue now. It is *plus forte que moi*.’

‘Mademoiselle! it is not your mother, it is this business about your marriage.’

‘Not my marriage; I shall never marry.’

‘Oh, nonsense, nonsense!’ cried Mrs. Wargrave. ‘I am sure you want to have him all the time. It will be too ridiculous if for a set of foolish romantic scruples you go and throw a good match away.’

Mademoiselle made no reply. She stood uneasily moving from one foot to another, clasping and unclasping her hands. ‘I must. I must get away,’ she said quietly, almost under her breath. ‘It must come to an end. I can do no good while I am kept in agitation. Ah, Mrs. Wargrave, let me go.’

‘I wish you would be frank and tell me who he is,’ said Mrs. Wargrave. ‘I wish you would let me speak to him. Going away is the very last thing you ought to do. To throw away a good match at your age, and with your prospects! I told you before it was criminal, Mademoiselle.’

Mademoiselle said something under her breath, in her agitation, which sounded like ‘You do not know,’ and Mrs. Wargrave grew angry. ‘I don’t know? Who knows, then, I wonder? I tell you that for you, in your position, with your mother to think of, it is simple wickedness. If the man were an ogre I’d marry him if I were in your position. Goodness, what have you to do with his family? You make me so impatient I could shake you. You should marry him, whoever he is, if he can give you a good home.’

‘If Madame Wargrave could but spare me for a month—for three weeks!’

‘I am sure it’s not for your own good. You should be proud to stay and marry him, for your own good. Mademoiselle! I tell you, whoever he is, if he were an ogre—’

Mademoiselle suddenly laid her hand upon the arm of her patroness. There was a gleam of desperation in her eyes. ‘You would not say so were I to tell you his name.’

‘I would say so, whatever is his name, for your own good. What is his name?’

They stood looking at each other for a moment, both of them excited, Mrs. Wargrave full of curiosity, and Claire carried away by the passion of the moment, feeling it the only way to clear herself, to throw off the shadow of double-dealing which she felt upon her; but the crisis was a desperate one, and calmed her in spite of herself. She took her hand from the other's arm. 'It is Mr. Charles Wargrave,' she said.

Mrs. Wargrave received the shock in all its force, being wholly unprepared for it. She was so startled that her sudden movement shook the very walls. 'Mr. Charles Wargrave?' she repeated, with a voice of horror. 'It can't—it can't be true! Is it true?'

To this question Mademoiselle did not answer a word.

'Charles Wargrave!' repeated the lady, with a mixture of consternation and incredulity. 'And you're not ashamed to tell me that?' she cried. 'You can stand and look me in the face?'

Claire had not looked her in the face, but at these words she raised her head and met Mrs. Wargrave's angry eyes. She was pale, but she did not flinch. Now it was all over, she knew. This house, which might have been more or less hers for five years, the salary which had helped to maintain her mother, the freedom from care for so long,—all was over! When she went out of these doors it would be to face the world again, to find another means of subsistence, to begin anew.

Mrs. Wargrave turned and left the room, and Mademoiselle saw nothing of her till next day, when in the morning, before the lessons had begun, she was summoned downstairs. To her surprise she found Mr. Leicester Wargrave, as well as his wife, awaiting her in the room which they called the library. He was seated at the writing-table with some papers before him, she standing beside him. With some ceremony a chair was placed for her, and she was asked to sit down. 'We will not detain you long, Mademoiselle,' Mr. Wargrave said, clearing his throat, and Mrs. Wargrave, too, coughed and cleared hers before she began.

'Mademoiselle, you will not wonder that I thought it right to consult my husband about what you said last night. He thinks you must have made a mistake. His cousin is not at all that kind of man.'

Claire's countenance lighted up with sudden indignation. 'I have made no mistake,' she said.

'Ladies are apt to think, when a young man is just amusing himself, that he means something. Anyhow, of course we can't pass it over.'

‘Pass it over!’

‘I mean—that we think your going to Paris a very good plan; and perhaps, if you could find something there that would suit you, it would be better for you—to be within reach of your mother.’

‘You mean that I am not wanted here again?’

‘It is not so decided as that. I’m sure we’re both very sorry that any unpleasantness should have arisen, and both Mr. Wargrave and I think you have behaved very well, Mademoiselle. You have nothing to reproach yourself with, and we’ll be delighted to answer any inquiries. But, on the whole, I think, if you could find something in Paris, or thereabouts—where you could be nearer your mother—I do think you would find it—a relief to your mind.’

‘You are, no doubt, right, Mrs. Wargrave,’ said Mademoiselle, rising from her chair.

‘Yes, I’m sure I’m right: and Mr. Wargrave has written a cheque—for the difference, you know. And if you would like Sarah to help you with your boxes—we thought you might, perhaps, like to go by the night train.’

CHAPTER VIII.

It is needless to add that Claire did not say a word in remonstrance or objection. She was startled and unprepared for such summary measures. And yet she said to herself that she had fully expected it, and was not surprised that her employer should take energetic measures to stop such a *mésalliance*. A *mésalliance*! But she reflected with her usual philosophy that it would be so, that her *beau nom* meant nothing, less even in her own country than here. If she had been a man who could confer that *beau nom* in return for some romantic nobody’s money, then perhaps there might have been some value in it; but to her, a woman, an old maid, a governess! She was far too proud to ask for an hour’s delay, even for so much as would enable her to travel by day instead of by night; yet there was no doubt that it was with a very strange sensation that she felt herself dismissed from the recognised place in which yesterday she had expected to remain for years, and facing once more a blank world, in which she knew not where to go, or what her next standing-point might be. It is true that she was in no way destitute or without a

refuge. She had her mother's house to go to, the little shabby apartment in Paris, where she could scarcely hope to be triumphantly received, seeing that her return meant a diminution of its slender resources, besides the inference which old Aunt Clotilde at least would be so ready to draw, that Claire had left her good situation in disgrace. This suggestion made her blood boil, and it was one which was inevitable. But still there was nothing hopeless or even terrible in her position. She was sufficiently well known in the circles where people of her class are known to have little fear of finding another situation. And she had already known so many new beginnings that another did not appal her. No, there was nothing desperate, nothing tragical in her circumstances. A little additional humiliation, a shock, perhaps a reproach, but no more. And perhaps it was the best thing that could have happened. It put a stop summarily to an episode that never would have come to anything, which was well; surely from any point of view it was well. When she found herself on the Channel, looking somewhat wistfully at the clear sky overhead, full of the softness of the summer stars, and at the dim whiteness of the cliffs she was leaving behind, it is possible that Claire saw them blurred yet amplified through the medium of a tear. In front of her the other coast was lost in the distance and darkness of night, so that while what was past was still clear, what was future was wholly invisible, which was a perfect symbol of life itself. She noted the similitude with that love of imagery which is natural to a soul in trouble, with forlorn interest. How little she had expected last night to be crossing the Channel thus! how suddenly her existence had changed!

But these are vicissitudes which must occur in the life of a governess, for whom more than for most human creatures there is no continuing city; and by the time Mademoiselle had left behind her that dark and mystic interval of the Channel, with all its suggestions, she had begun to be able to indulge in a rueful smile at the transformation scene which had been played for her (doubtful) amusement in her late home in the Square. Mrs. Wargrave's indignation at her fastidious and romantic objection to marry a man who could make a provision for her turned in a moment into swift horror and alarm lest such a catastrophe should occur, and the acknowledgment that Mademoiselle had 'behaved very well' in the reluctance which half an hour before she had denounced as folly! Claire had known how it would be from the

first, and it was an amusing exhibition of human inconsistency. But yet she was not so much amused after all. Exhibitions of this kind, perhaps, fail of their effect when they are too closely connected with ourselves. The spectator must not be too much involved in them if he would retain his power to smile.

When Charles Wargrave next appeared at the Square he was greeted by his two small cousins with rapture. They had great news to tell him. Mademoiselle had gone away. 'Oh, Uncle Charles, only think what has happened!' The information was so unexpected that he was off his guard, and his consternation was evident. 'Mademoiselle de Castel-Sombre!' he said in tones of dismay. Mrs. Wargrave kept her countenance very well, and maintained a close watch upon him under her eyelids, without betraying herself, but Leicester Wargrave, who was at home, as it was Sunday, was exceedingly uneasy, and hewed away at the roast mutton before him, though everybody had been helped, to conceal the agitation he felt.

'Oh, you know her name? It is such a funny name, like a name in a novel. I never could keep it in mind; but, of course, to introduce her to anyone, in her position, it was enough to say Mademoiselle.'

'Do you think so? It is scarcely like your usual good breeding,' said Charles, concealing his agitation too as best he could under a tone of high and somewhat acrid superiority. 'And perhaps you don't know that Castel-Sombre is an historical name, and one of the best in Béarn—which makes a difference.'

'Oh, if you go so far as that,' said Mrs. Wargrave with a slight quaver in her voice. She did not resent what he said; indeed, she felt very humble before him and deprecated any argument. 'We did not know, of course, when she came that she was anyone—in particular. I mean, anyone out of the ordinary.'

'And has it been long settled that she was to go away?' said Charles Wargrave in his most formal voice, addressing his cousin grandly from an eminence: which he had a right to do, as at once a man of fashion and the principal partner in the firm—a right, however, which he very seldom exercised.

'Oh, it was only on Friday,' cried Edith; 'she never said a word till then.'

'And she went away the same night, oh! in such a hurry,' added Dorothy, breathless to bring forth her part of the news before she could be frustrated. 'She went by the night train.'

'After she had that talk in the morning, mother, with you and papa in the library,' Edith burst in.

'Yes, poor thing!' said Mrs. Wargrave. 'She had told me on Monday night her mother was ill; and, of course, in the circumstances I spoke to Leicester, and we did what we could to make it easier for her.' Leicester paused in his destruction of the leg of mutton at this speech and gave his wife an astonished look: but Charles was too much preoccupied to note these signs of excitement, and he had to defend himself from observation at the same time.

'That was kind of you,' he said, though with a certain haughtiness. He was angry that they should have given her aid, that she should have accepted it; but this was a sentiment impossible to express. 'Then I suppose you little ones have holidays now, and no lessons?' he said, attempting a lighter tone.

'Only till the new governess comes,' said Edith; 'and oh! mother went out that very day to ask about another,' cried Dorothy in an aggrieved tone.

'Oh!' he said; 'then Mademoiselle de Castel-Sombre is not coming back?'

'She is so anxious about her mother,' said Mrs. Wargrave, 'we thought, that is, she made up her mind, that it would be better to look for something in Paris, that she might be near her mother. You know,' added the lady, seeing a chance of administering a return blow, 'her mother must be quite an old lady, for Mademoiselle herself is far from young.'

Charles Wargrave gave her a keen look. But the pudding had been placed before her, and she was busy serving it, an occupation quite inconsistent, surely, with any unkind meaning. Leicester was a great deal more likely to betray himself, and was indeed very uneasy, looking and feeling very guilty, wondering how his wife should be able to tell such lies, yet not venturing to contradict her; for he had been as strong as she was on the necessity of parting Charlie (if he was really such a fool) from Mademoiselle.

Little more, however, was said. Charles was so much confused by this sudden catastrophe that it took him some time to collect his thoughts. And he felt it quite possible that Claire might have fled from him, and not by any means the worst omen for his success. If she had fled it was that she was afraid of yielding. His heart rose as he reflected that by going home she had freed herself from all hindrance to their intercourse; that he might go

and see her without having to watch for an opportunity; that he might gain partisans in her family, make himself friends. These reflections cleared his brow, and made this alarming explanation, which had hung like a thunder-cloud over Mrs. Leicester Wargrave, pass over with more ease than could have been hoped. The pair exchanged a look of congratulation as they rose from the table. The danger for the moment was past, or so at least they thought.

'By the way,' said Charles, when his cousin and he strolled out into the garden to smoke the inevitable cigarette, 'I suppose you can give me Mademoiselle de Castel-Sombre's address in Paris?' He took his cigarette from his mouth and blew away a long pennon of smoke, as if it had been the most simple question in the world.

'Mademoiselle's address!' said Leicester Wargrave, with open eyes and mouth.

'Yes. I've—I've got a book of hers which I should like to send back.'

'You'd better send it to my wife,' said Leicester. 'Women have ways of managing these things. You had much better send it to my wife.'

'Women have ways! One would think it was some mystery you were talking of.'

'I say, Charlie, I'm older than you are, and I've seen more of the world. Don't you go after that Frenchwoman. They're not to be trusted. Marry if you like, but marry an English—'

'What are you talking of?' cried Charles, red with wonder and wrath.

'Well, I don't know. Perhaps it's only the silly way women have of looking at a thing. They said, you know—but I don't generally mind them for my part.'

'I should like very much to know what they said.'

Mrs. Wargrave was seized with a panic when she saw the two gentlemen together. She had no confidence in her husband. 'He will go and spoil everything,' she said to herself; and the consequence was that she hurried out to join them, arriving just at this critical point in the conversation. 'What who said?' she asked lightly. 'I believe you are talking gossip, you two.'

'Leicester tells me that somebody, whom he calls the women, have been talking—apparently about me. I want to know what they said.'

'You are a pair of regular old gossips,' said the lady, though she grew a little pale. 'They said, and he said, and she said!'

You need not be afraid, dear Charlie; nobody says any harm of you.'

'It is to be hoped so,' he replied shortly. 'Perhaps you will tell me, Marian, the address of Mademoiselle de Castel-Sombre in Paris; Leicester does not seem to know.'

'Mademoiselle's address!' cried Mrs. Leicester, startled like her husband.

'Is there anything so wonderful in my question? I may have something to send her. I may know some one who wants—her help.'

'Dear Charlie,' said Mrs. Wargrave, 'I know you'll think it strange when I tell you—just as if she had something to conceal!—she left no address.'

He turned upon his cousin, who was gazing at his wife, and caught him unawares. Seizing his arm: 'Is that true?' he said.

'Charlie, don't!' said Leicester Wargrave. 'My good fellow, don't do it. You'll never repent it but once, and that will be all your life.'

'What does he mean?' said Charles, turning from the husband to the wife.

'How can I tell what he means?' cried that lady. 'You are very uncivil to ask him if what I say is true. It is perfectly true. He may talk as much nonsense as he pleases, but it is the plain fact that I don't know Mademoiselle's address.'

Charles Wargrave looked her in the face sternly. 'I do not believe you!' he said, as if every word had been a stone; and, flinging his cigarette among the bushes, he turned round and left the garden and the house. It startled him a little as he went out to receive the same answer from the butler, to whom he repeated his question. 'The young lady, sir, went off in a great hurry. I asked her where I should send her letters, but she said she expected no letters. And she went off without leaving an address.'

Was it a conspiracy against him, framed by her? or was it some interference of Marian's? or was it true, which would almost be worst of all?

It is a bad thing not to leave an address, but it is not such an effectual shield of privacy as might be wished. What with directories and other aids, it is very difficult for anyone who does not belong to the hopelessly nomadic portion of the population to conceal their whereabouts for long. Charles Wargrave had all his wits about him, and he knew his Paris as well as foreigners ever succeed

in knowing that wonderful city. The result of his investigations was that before a fortnight had passed he knocked at a door on the second floor of a house in one of the smaller streets near the Arc de Triomphe, and asked to see Madame Castel. He was shown into a tiny salon, looking out upon a narrow court; a little room full of traces of a larger life, which did not make it more attractive now, with furniture too large, pictures which seemed to overshadow its small dimensions like clouds—relics evidently of a time when the family life was not pinched and restrained as now. A photograph of Claire was on the mantelpiece among other household treasures, at sight of which the visitor gave an exclamation of relief: for, though he had come in so boldly, he had been quite uncertain whether this was or was not the place he was seeking. He was standing before the little picture which had given him the welcome assurance that he was right, when the door opened and an old lady came in. She was, as Mrs. Leicester Wargrave had suggested, quite an old lady, with a cap made of black lace covering her rusty grey hair. Keen curiosity and an almost hunger of earnestness were in her blue eyes, which kept their colour and brightness, though the countenance was so faded. She had the air of one who had kept asking, 'What is it? what is it?' for weary and unsatisfied years. She was dressed with that curious neglect which characterises so many Frenchwomen indoors, in garments indescribably dingy, of the colour of poverty, a well-ascertained and understood hue—the same, with variations, which was visible in the carpets and curtains and all the old furniture—but had so much intelligence in her face that her age and shabbiness had nothing in them that was disagreeable. Charles Wargrave made her his bow, like an Englishman, not like a Frenchman, and the old lady, though her nationality had been partly washed out by long acquaintance with Parisian shabbiness and mannerisms and formality, the reverse of the medal of which the brighter side only is visible to visitors, noted the difference with a favourable impression. There was a certain witchlike ruggedness in her features and look which betrayed the old Scotch stock, never uncongenial with the French, from which she sprang.

'You have a daughter, Madame,' said Wargrave, who felt as shy as a schoolboy before the keen old lady, who measured him from head to foot with her penetrating eyes.

'Two,' she replied quickly. 'That is Claire, at which you are looking; and that is Léonore, who is away, who is in a situation.

My eldest daughter came home about a fortnight ago. She has gone out to see some people who put an advertisement in "Galignani." Perhaps you wish to see her—about an engagement?

'That is exactly what I wish,' said Wargrave, with an uneasy smile.

'Ah! will you take a seat? She may come back at any moment; and if I could in the meantime give you any particulars——'

'Madame de Castel-Sombre——'

'No, no,' said the old lady, putting away the double-barrelled name, as it were, with a wave of her hand. 'Plain Castel, if you please; that is enough for us now.'

'Madame,' repeated Charles Wargrave, 'it is not the kind of engagement you think of, which I wish to propose to Mademoiselle Claire.'

'Ah!' cried the mother with a sudden start; 'is it, well—what is it? I may misunderstand you. Please to speak plainly. You are——?' She gave a quick glance at his card, which she held in her hand. 'It is the same name as Claire's employers in London. Perhaps I am making a mistake. Is she called back?'

'The people in London are my relations. I saw your daughter there; you will not wonder, perhaps, that I admired her, that I did all I could to make myself known to her—that I loved her.'

He made a pause, feeling his story somewhat embarrassing to tell under the close inspection of the mother's eyes.

'No,' she said, after a moment's pause, 'I am not surprised. I have always thought Claire a very interesting woman; but, pardon me, I should have thought her a little too old for you.'

'What does that matter?' he cried, vehemently angry to have this objection produced against him from the last quarter in the world where it could have been expected.

'Well, nothing, if you don't think so,' said this reasonable old lady. 'I only mentioned it as a fact, you know. I am afraid it will weigh with Claire herself.'

'Madame Castel, I have come to throw myself upon your protection. Would it not be better for Claire to be the mistress of her own house, and that a good one, to have her own life, and that a prosperous one, even though weighted with a husband, than to live and work as she is doing now?'

'Perhaps I should think the husband the best part of it,' said Madame Castel. 'Your appeal is a little bewildering, seeing that

I never saw you before ; but I agree with you, if it is as you say. My protection, however, is not of much importance. What would you have me to do ?’

‘Mademoiselle de Castel-Sombre is French, and in France a mother’s power is supreme.’

‘Ah,’ said the old lady, shaking her head, ‘don’t flatter yourself. A mother’s power is seldom supreme over a daughter of thirty-five ; and,’ she added, ‘I would gladly secure these good things for my Claire ; but she is more able to judge than I am. Does she know ?’

‘I have done all I could to make her aware of my respectful devotion,’ said the young man, with a certain formality which came to him in the air of the unaccustomed foreign place, ‘but, indeed, I have no reason to flatter myself. My hope is that the objections which she thought valid in my cousin’s house might not exist here.’

‘Ah, it was in your cousin’s house. Then that explains——’ Madame Castel said. She gave a sigh of relief. ‘I had been fearing something, I know not what. She came so suddenly, without any warning but a telegram. I see it now.’

‘Mother, what is it you see now ?’

Claire came into the room, bringing the air of the morning with her, a fresh waft of outdoor atmosphere. She was not the Mademoiselle of the Square. There was a freedom in her movements—the freedom of a woman at home, not the enforced sobriety of an official. Her look was alert and bright ; she had found pleasure in her native air, in the surroundings she loved : and yet there was a line of anxiety in her forehead. She was emancipated for the moment, and keenly felt the warm thrill of independence ; but she was anxious for her future, and that of her mother, and full of care. Pleased, yet anxious and full of care—it seemed a contradiction in words—and yet Charles Wargrave saw all that, and read more, written in her face. She had not seen him as he sat within the shadow of the door, and, he thought, he had never seen her before, free to express any emotion, free to come and go as she pleased, carrying her heart in her face.

‘I have not been successful,’ she said. ‘Never mind ; better luck will come to-morrow. They say I am quite sure to hear of something before—— Mr. Wargrave!’ she cried, with a sudden step back. The blood rushed to her face and then forsook it. Her brow clouded, her countenance fell.

‘Yes, Mademoiselle Claire.’ He had risen to his feet, and

stood before her with a painful, whimsical consciousness that he could not bow like a Frenchman, which, perhaps, was the sort of thing to please her, shooting through his mind even in the excitement of the moment, and all the eager rush of feeling roused by seeing her again in this new phase.

Claire was too much startled to know what she was saying. A flood of strange feelings seemed to carry her away. Her head, which she had carried with such airy grace, drooped; something seemed to dazzle her eyes. 'I did not expect,' she said, faltering, 'to see you here.'

'I have come—to seek the protection of your mother,' he said. It was said in English, but the meaning was French. And there was something so strange in the idea of Madame Castel's protection—the shabby eager old lady—extended to this young man, who had everything that life could bestow, that Claire, after a hard effort to restrain herself, and with something hysterical climbing in her throat, suddenly broke the embarrassment of the situation by the most inappropriate thing in the world—a burst of unsteady laughter, which returned again and again, and would not be quieted. 'My mother's protection!'

It was the ridiculous which follows so close upon the heels of the sublime. But though she laughed, Claire foresaw how it would be: Madame Castel's protection threw such a weight into the scales on Charles Wargrave's side that there was scarcely anything more to say. He was not sent away again. He remained and found the little shabby apartment divine. It was his turn to laugh when they compared notes and found that even the obstacle of age meant nothing more than a few days. And thus this little drama, so exciting while it lasted, came to a speedy and satisfactory end. It is the penalty of a happy *dénouement* that it is not half so interesting as the painful steps that sometimes lead to it; and Claire, in all the brilliancy of her late but perfect good fortune, was too happy to mind or to attract that sympathy which attended Mademoiselle.

The Leicester Wargraves found it a bitter experience when Mademoiselle returned as Madame, with a finer house, finer carriages, more social honours than themselves. They said everything which she had herself predicted to Mrs. Wargrave that they would say, calling her a designing woman, an artful adventuress, and half-a-dozen slanders more. But if anybody was harmed by their proceedings it was themselves, and not Claire.

